

A Not-So-Normal Life by Hauptbahnhof

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Mystery, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-12-17 09:55:30

Updated: 2016-12-31 04:03:02

Packaged: 2019-12-17 14:55:24

Rating: T

Chapters: 14

Words: 39,354

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Sequel to my first fanfic (The Unknown), so you should probably read that one first to understand some elements in this one. Focuses more on the Stranger Things characters than the last one. This is the story I actually wanted to write from the beginning, but I needed to write the first one as intro. Possible spoilers. UPDATE: Now complete.

1. Chapter 1: A Normal Life

A/N: Welcome to my second fanfic! If you haven't yet, please read the first one I wrote (titled The Unknown) as there are some things introduced in that one that are pretty important in this one. That first one really just is supposed to be an introduction to this story, which is the story I actually wanted to write from the beginning.

I don't own Stranger Things or any of the characters from the show. I don't know why I have to say that, but everyone here does so... why not.

After a couple of days in the hospital, the doctors said that Eleven had a clean bill of health and that she could go home. Some people at The Coalition went through all the paperwork to make her an official person and a citizen of the United States, as well as officially registering her as the adopted child of Joyce Byers. After everything that Eleven had done for Joyce's family while Will was missing, she liked to see her face around the house. Once she was adopted, her name was changed to "Elle" instead of "Eleven", but everyone that knew her still called her Eleven (or at least El). Eleven asked Joyce why her name had to be changed, and Joyce found it kind of hard to explain that "Elle" is a "real name". Eleven wondered what made her name not real, but she just chose to accept that it was something that would help start her "normal life" that the man in the hospital with her had talked about. Peter Carter was not much of a topic of discussion around the group that knew of Eleven's true origin, but they did recognize him as some sort of hero. He had no previous connection to them, but he still risked his life to help them get their friend back.

Unfortunately, Eleven's "normal life" had to start out being not so normal. She needed to get caught up with the boys if she wanted to attend school with them, that meant she had to spend the remainder of the school year at home, learning everything she needed to know for school. She had been to school once with the boys when Will was missing, it seemed like a happy place, with more children her age than she ever knew existed, so she was always confused when the boys came home complaining about it. She was taught by whoever

was free, often that was Joyce, but she had to work on some days. When that happened, Chief Hopper would come a lot of the time to help her. She liked it when the Chief was around, he was always warm and comforting to her. A couple of other people like Mike's mom would come around every once in a while, but nobody as often as Joyce and the Chief. Sometimes, nobody was available and Eleven would just have to stay at home alone. She didn't mind. She used that time to watch TV, or try to read some of the books her friends got for her. At first, she was scared to be without anyone, it reminded her of when the people in the bad place would lock her up alone, but she realized that she wasn't locked up. She could go outside, eat when she wanted, she was free. Her favorite part of the day by far though was when school ended and she could leave the house and see her friends. Chief Hopper bought her a new bike in late March after all the snow had melted. He also got her a helmet, when he showed it to her, she asked him why she needed it, none of her friends wore these special hats when riding their bikes. But, after beginning to learn how to ride her bike, she realized why she needed it. It took her a while to get the hang of it, but she persisted because she knew that this was the best way she could go and see her friends. After a couple of weeks, she was riding around town pretty confidently, but she still wore the helmet, it made her feel safe.

After her tutoring during the day, Eleven spent most of her time at Mike's house. They would watch movies, sometimes just talk, and a lot of time she would sit off to the side while the others played Dungeons and Dragons. She didn't know exactly how to play, but she still enjoyed watching them. She liked all the emotions she saw on their faces while they played. The people in the lab never really showed emotions as much as her friends did while playing, her favorite was when they were happy, when something went their way. She never understood why they were so happy, but it made her feel all warm and fuzzy inside when they were.

When the summer started, her lessons slowed, but never really came to a stop. Eleven was learning at a really fast rate and if she kept up some of her tutoring during the summer, Joyce thought she would be ready to attend school with the boys in the fall. This prospect made Eleven really excited. She could spend even more time with her friends, she wouldn't have to wait until they got home to do things

with them. For this reason, where almost anyone else would get angry at the prospect of having to do school in the summer, Eleven was excited and devoted a lot of her energy to it. Even though she was so excited, she didn't learn as much in her tutoring sessions during the summer as in she school year because there were many more opportunities to do things with her friends since they had almost entirely free time. In mid July, Joyce and Eleven went to the school office and they registered her as a student for the next school year. Nobody in the town had ever seen her before, but the secretary in charge of the paperwork didn't ask too many questions and just signed up 'Elle Byers' as a student of Hawkins Middle School.

About two weeks before classes started, everyone got their schedules in the mail. Eleven and the others met up almost immediately at Mike's house to compare class placements. Eleven learned that she had every class with at least one of the few people she knew except for her history class right after lunch. Each one of them had a couple of classes in common, but they one they were all most excited about was chemistry with Mr. Kaminsky right before lunch. Mr. Kaminsky was the only teacher in Hawkins that taught at both the middle and high schools, Nancy had him the year before for her high school chemistry class. She told them that he wasn't anything particularly special, but she didn't have any horror stories about him ('horror stories' in this case meaning something completely different from what Eleven thought at first).

There was not too much that needed to get done before the school year started. They all went school supply shopping together and Nancy took Eleven out to get some nice new clothes for her first day. As far as Eleven could tell, this was the start of her normal life. Something she didn't really know existed a couple of months ago. She thought this was the beginning of the life that all of her friends had had for their whole lives, but little did they all know that it was the start of something completely different.

A/N: I have no idea how often chapters will be posted to this story, probably just whenever they are ready. I will try to make sure there isn't more than a week gap between them, but with the holidays coming up, you can never be too sure. This story will be much longer than the previous one, with longer chapters. I don't know exactly

how long it will be though (probably exactly as long as I am interested in writing it). I am writing mainly to improve my creative writing skills, so please review.

2. Chapter 2: The Substutute

A/N: Wow! This chapter is a little less than half the length of my entire previous story!

The first two weeks of school at Hawkins Middle were pretty normal to Mike, Will, Lucas, and Dustin, but to Eleven, it was the most interesting time of her life. Yes, she had defeated an inter-dimensional monster with her mind once, but the little things about society tended to be the ones she found the most interesting. She was the most excited she had ever been in her life, but also more scared than she had been in a while. It was a little easier for her because she could sit next to Mike near the back of the room in her first class (English). She was caught off guard a little bit when the teacher picked up a clipboard with a piece of paper on it and said he was going to "call roll". Eleven wasn't sure what this was and wanted to ask Mike, but he had told her in advance that they weren't supposed to talk in class unless the teacher had told them to. After the teacher called a name (Tom Anderson) someone in the back of the room raised their hand and said "here", then, because 'Byers' comes so early in the alphabet, the teacher called for "Elle Byers". Eleven wasn't exactly sure what she should do, so she just did what the other person did. She raised her hand and said "here" (though she said it a little weaker than the first person). The teacher then continued to the next name, then Eleven turned to Mike who smiled at her and gave her a slight nod. She began to smile a little bit too because she assumed this meant she did it right.

Once the teacher had called out all the names on the list, he handed out some papers and started explaining what they were going to be doing in that class during the year. After a little bit, Eleven settled down a little bit when the class started to seem more like one of her tutoring sessions with Joyce, just with more people. She hung on to every word the teacher was saying. She was captivated even though she didn't understand every single word the teacher was saying. She made a couple of mental notes on things that she didn't understand to ask Mike about when the class was over, but she could tell where the teacher was going with his lecture for most of it. After a little while, Eleven was startled when a loud ringing noise came though and

everyone got up out of their seats.

"What's happening?" she asked Mike.

"Oh, sorry, we didn't explain it to you. When you hear that sound, it means that the class is over and we should start going to the next one."

"Oh. Ok." Eleven smiled a little bit at her new understanding. Once outside the room, they saw Dustin, who had the next class (math) with Eleven. They had arranged to meet there after English.

"How was your first school experience, El?" Dustin asked

"It was interesting. It was like my classes at home, but just with a lot more people all learning the same thing." she replied, with a massive smile on her face. Mike smiled a little at this too. He found the class pretty boring, but there was no way for him to get too annoyed about when Eleven was this happy about it. The rest of the day progressed more or less the same. Eleven got much more confident when the teachers would "call roll" at the beginning of each lesson. Some of her teachers were more interesting than others, she thought, but they all kept her attention with their lessons (despite the fact that Dustin fell asleep in math right next to Eleven and the teacher had to come back and bang on his desk to wake him back up and embarrass him a little). She liked lunch time most of all though. Everyone in Eleven's little group of friends had chemistry together and were able to walk to lunch together, laughing the whole way when they heard about Dustin and his math class nap. While they ate, Eleven didn't say too much unless someone specifically asked her a question, she was content to hear what the others had to say.

Eventually, the last bell of the day rang and Eleven began to run out to the bike rack where everyone had agreed to meet. One of the teachers yelled "no running" at her and she slowed down, embarrassed because she didn't know that was a rule. No real harm came of it and she still made it out to the bikes faster than the others. She went over to her bike and began to turn the little rings on the bike lock until the numbers matched the ones Joyce had shown her at the beginning of the day. With a slight tug, the lock came apart and the bike was free. Her friends showed up soon after and they started

biking home. They all went to Mike's house for a small celebration featuring pizza and a couple more funny stories from the day, but soon, they had to go home. Eleven had homework for the first time in her life and she spent the evening with Joyce doing it. When they were finally done with the assignments, they had dinner in honor of Eleven's first day of school that consisted entirely of Eggos.

The next days and the next week of school went pretty much the same as the first one, but Eleven was much more comfortable. She knew what to do during roll call, she knew when to take notes, and she even put her hand up in the air to give an answer a couple of times in biology with Mr. Clarke (who quickly became her favorite teacher). The complaining about homework that had been common in the last school year returned among the boys, but Eleven didn't mind. She was happy with herself when she was able to do some assignments all on her own. She was beginning to understand school and beginning to enjoy her normal life, but that wouldn't completely last for too much longer.

Even though Mr. Clarke was her favorite teacher, chemistry with Mr. Kaminsky was her favorite class, because she got there really early and sat in the back with the boys. They arrived in the class one day and made their way to their normal seats in the middle of the back. They could have all taken the entire last row, but they took up a block of seats in the corner as that made conversation a little easier. Another meaningless conversation about the previous weekend's Dungeons and Dragons campaign began in the group on Monday of the third week of the school year, but it was abruptly interrupted by Lucas, who came in last.

"Did you guys hear the news?" he asked in the middle of a growing argument.

"What news?" Dustin asked. He was a little annoyed that he was interrupted when he had such a good point he wanted to make, but Lucas's news seemed a little more urgent.

"Kaminsky quit yesterday!" Lucas said after pausing for a moment to build suspense and admire the wonder on the others' faces. Everyone was pretty surprised to hear that, but also excited for the little bit of interesting chaos it would bring to the class.

"Why'd he do that?" asked Will.

"He won the lottery yesterday. He quit his job and left on some giant vacation over the weekend." Lucas replied, just as excited as the others.

"Does this mean we still have to be sitting here, or can we just leave early today? There is no way the school had enough notice to find a sub for him." Mike asked hopefully.

"Nope, apparently they were able to find a long-term sub pretty immediately." Lucas said, this time a little disappointed along with the others, except for Eleven.

"What's a 'sub'?" she asked Mike.

"It's short for 'substitute'. It means another teacher is going to come and teach the class for now." he explained. She gave him a small nod to acknowledge that she had understood him. The group returned to their small talk, but with a little bit more buzz to them at the prospect of the class being turned upside down. The bell rang and a teacher came into the room, but most of them didn't give him much notice as they got their notebooks out even though they weren't actually expecting to take too many notes on the first day with the sub. Mike looked over to Eleven for a moment and saw her focusing on the substitute at the front of the room. She looked as if she remembered him, but she couldn't place him exactly in her memory. Mike turned to the man and he too seemed to remember him from a distant memory.

"Hello." The man began; "My name is Dr. Carter." he said, writing his name in big letters on the board in case anyone didn't hear just right. At this point, Mike was about 90% sure he knew where he remembered the man from, but it seemed impossible. Could this actually be the secret agent who helped rescue Eleven from the Upside Down? "I just moved here from New York and I will be your substitute chemistry teacher, probably for the rest of the year. Now, the first thing it says to do on this sheet from the office is to call roll." He searched around on the desk for a moment until he found the clipboard with the class list. "OK, first we have Elle Byers." He squinted at the clipboard for a moment and Eleven didn't have time

to answer before he started to think out loud; "Elle... with two L's and an E... and Byers. That's..." he looked up from the list for a moment to notice all the strange stares he was getting. "Normal. That's normal. Why should it be any different? That's probably been your name for your whole life." Dr. Carter then saw that Eleven was raising her hand to let him know that she was there and he continued on pretty quickly, trying his best to forget his little slip-up. Mike and everyone else in the back corner of the room were now absolutely sure that their substitute chemistry teacher was Peter Carter; a secret agent with The Coalition who had helped get Eleven back from the Upside Down in January. They didn't recognize him at first because he was wearing a dull brown sweater vest in place of the suit that they had seen him in the last time, and he was wearing some big, certainly fake, glasses.

After roll call, Carter asked the class what they were learning last week. Nobody in the back corner of the room raised their hand, they were all too stunned to answer. One of the girls at the front of the room eventually answered and Carter turned to the board and began the lesson. Almost everyone began to take notes on what was actually a pretty interesting and interactive chemistry lesson despite the fact that it was all just the math behind some concepts. The only ones who didn't take notes were the ones who were too stunned by the identity of their teacher to pay any attention to what he was saying about acids and bases. Any other teacher would have noticed that there was a block of students in their class who weren't paying any attention, and even though Carter noticed this, he understood the reason and let it be.

Eventually, the bell rang signaling the start of lunch.

"OK, everyone! That was a good lesson. No homework. That's a present from me because it's my first day, don't come to expect it." Dr. Carter said while smiling to the crowd of students that were all trying to leave through the same small door at the same time to get to lunch. Eleven and her friends tried to get to the front of the room, but got blocked by the crowd. They eventually made it to the front of the room and stopped at the big teacher's table as Carter was saying goodbye to the last of the other students exiting the room. When they left, he closed the door and locked it just to be safe. "So... how did I

do? Not that bad of a teacher, am I?" Carter said while smiling at the speechless group standing at the table. He walked to the other side of the table to face them while a couple of them tried to say something. Dustin was the first one to break the awkward silence;

"Elle... with two L's and an E... and Byers." he said in a mocking tone.

"I will admit, that was a slip up." Carter replied, only a hint of the smile staying on his lips.

"What are you doing here?" Mike asked.

"Am I on trial? Maybe I quit my Coalition job to become a small town chemistry teacher. Maybe I just wanted to come by and say hi."

"I'm assuming that's not why you're here." Mike said, somewhat suspicious of the agent's motives for returning to Hawkins.

"No, you're right. As much as I would like to just be here for a visit, I am here on work. We got some strange readings, completely different from the ones we got last time, and my bosses decided they should be investigated. I was the only one in the office with experience in this particular corner of the world, so I got sent."

"Should we be scared?" asked Will.

"No, probably not. It's probably nothing."

"No." said Eleven.

"No? No, what?" asked Carter.

"No, you wouldn't be here if it was 'probably nothing'." Eleven said slowly.

"Well, I must say, you are talking a lot more than the last time I saw you." Carter said.

"She has a valid point. Don't ignore the question." Mike interjected quickly.

"Fine." Carter said as he reluctantly started to get something out from

under the desk. It seemed he had given up on attempting to hide things from the youngest group of professional skeptics he ever saw. He got out a briefcase, turned the little wheels on the front of it until they made the correct combination, and popped it open. He pulled out a bunch of papers then. "These are the strange readings we got." He said pointing to some graphs. "I still don't know what they mean, and they seem to be coming from all over town, but the epicenter is definitely the laboratory." Eleven cringed when he mentioned the laboratory, which was understandable, knowing her past. "More worryingly, is the fact that all reports coming out of the lab have once again stopped. Last time, I was able to get a meeting over there, but this time when we officially asked them what was happening, they just handed over a couple of papers detailing some projects we already knew about and then just said that they were 'unable to accommodate visitors at this time'. I'm 100% sure they are hiding something from us."

"Why are you posing as a chemistry teacher?" Dustin asked.

"I thought that because of all the focus on the lab in this case, I should be somewhere where I could keep an eye on Eleven. Plus, the position was open."

"Yeah, that was strange how Kaminsky won the lottery like that." Lucas said, sounding as if he was making an accusation.

"What are you implying?"

"Nothing, it just seems a little too convenient."

"Fine, no point in lying to you guys. I needed an open position at the school and rather than using some of the dark techniques that other agencies use, I figured, why not make it something good for him?"

"What should we do?" asked Mike.

"Nothing." Agent Carter replied almost immediately. "You should stay at home and leave this to the professionals. If there is anything that affects you guys, I'll let you know, but at the moment, this is not your problem. This particular problem belongs to me and The Coalition. Now try to forget that I am here, go back to your normal lives. Go to

lunch and just carry on." He went to the door and opened it, signaling that the children should leave. They did, they got to the cafeteria and got out their lunch. None of them ate anything and none of them said much. They were all trying to process what they had just heard and deal with the emotion they thought they were done with last year; fear.

3. Chapter 3: The Dreams

Most of the group had been able to collect their thoughts enough by the end of lunch that they knew they had to discuss what had happened. They agreed to meet at the bike racks and then go to Mike's house where they could talk in peace. Eleven was the second one to get to the bikes, when she got there, Mike was already trying to get the lock off his bike. Neither said anything until they saw the one thing they didn't want to see. Troy and James were walking straight towards them. Mike didn't notice at first, but Eleven drew his attention to the matter. They had a couple of run-ins with the mouth-breathers during the first week of school. During the second week however, it all mysteriously stopped. Mike had hoped that this was because Troy had finally grown up a little bit and had gotten bored bullying them, but Mike later discovered it was because Troy had come down with some massive fever and had to stay home all week. Mike hoped he could have stayed at home for at least an eternity, but he knew that all good things had to come to an end. 'Maybe they wouldn't stop to mess with us.' thought Mike, but they stopped right in front of the two of them.

"Hey, frog-face." he said to Mike, spitting a little as he talked. He then turned to Eleven. "Still hanging out with this loser? I don't get how you could live with Byers and still bear to be around his friends out of choice." Troy, being as stupid as he was, still didn't make the connection that Will Byers' adopted sister was the exact same person that made him pee his pants in front of the whole school and somehow broke his arm by looking at it. Eleven did look much different than she did back then, she had longer hair and had some more weight on her so she was a little stronger. But despite that, she didn't look all that different than she did when she beat up Troy and James at the quarry. Any person with half a brain would at least be able to notice a resemblance, but neither of these two had half a brain, or really any brain for that matter.

"Yeah, what he said." James said in support of his friend. They continued on for a little bit while Mike and Eleven just kept quiet. About a minute later, they got bored, punched Mike squarely in the shoulder, then left. Both Mike and Eleven would have liked her to use

her powers and send the two of them flying back straight into the side of the building, but everyone agreed when she came back that it would be better if she didn't do any big demonstrations of her powers in public. They all thought that people would be afraid of her if they knew what she could do and she wouldn't be able to live out the normal life she wanted. Eleven did use her powers sometimes. While the group that knew who she was agreed that she shouldn't use them too often, they also agreed that it was her right to use them how she wished. They felt she was owed that after being forced to use her gifts for what other people wanted for so long. Eleven agreed, she felt free now that she could do what she wanted with her strengths. She didn't use them too much, but she liked having the option to.

Eventually, the others came and they rode in relative silence to Mike's house. When they got there, they entered through the door to the basement. Mike went upstairs to see if his mom was at home and once he determined she wasn't, they started their meeting.

"So... This is... unexpected." Mike began.

"I would say so!" came Dustin's voice from the couch on the wall. "Well what should we do? We can't actually just do nothing like he said!"

"I think that's a good idea for now." Will said, looking down at the table instead of the others' faces. He looked up, gaining confidence, when he started again. "We have no idea what this could possibly be. It could be dangerous. I know that I wasn't here last time something strange happened, and I know you all got involved in that and I thank you for it. But, this time, nobody we know is gone, as far as we know, we aren't in danger, and I for one would like to keep it that way for now." Dustin immediately opened his mouth to argue against this, but he struggled to fight Will's logic. While Dustin sat with his mouth hanging open, Mike responded instead;

"I agree. For now." he began, more seriously than usual. "But, there is a possibility that whatever is wrong will affect Eleven, and I'm not willing to let that happen." He looked at Eleven when he finished and saw her being entirely serious as well, but he also noticed a hint of a smile when he showed a little bit of how important she was to him. Eleven liked all of her friends, but she liked Mike the best. There was

something about the way she felt when she was around him that made him something special to her. By this point, Dustin had finally found his voice again;

"OK, I agree. For now." He stressed this second point. "What are we going to say to your mom?" Dustin turned to Will and Eleven. "She knows who Carter is and if she knows he's back, she might freak out. While we're on it, what about the chief, or anyone else who knows who he is?" None of them had thought about it, that the other people who know who Agent Carter actually was might be scared by his return.

"Oh, you're right." Will said in a moment of realization. "My mom would freak out if she thought there could be trouble again. She's more paranoid about keeping me safe since she got me back last November, I can't imagine what it would be like if she thought there was actually some possibility of danger."

"I know what you mean." Mike replied, coming to the same conclusion as his friend. "When you were missing, I got put under house arrest after dark. I was able to sneak out, but my mom knows I did, she would be more careful this time."

"Then it's agreed. We don't tell anyone that Carter's back." Lucas piped in after being strangely quiet during this conversation. "We're just going to try to keep as normal as possible." They all agreed to keep quiet the fact that a secret agent was now a Hawkins resident as well as a school teacher.

Mike tried to lighten the mood a little bit by offering everyone some snacks, but the consensus was pretty much that they all wanted to just go home and stew with their thoughts. Lucas was the first to voice this desire and everyone else followed pretty quickly after him.

Eleven sat alone in her room that evening. Joyce had to work that day and although she had finished most of her homework, Eleven still had some questions for her so she had no choice but to wait until she got home. Normally under these circumstances, she would read one of the books that people had gotten her since she had gotten back, or listen to music on the clock radio Joyce got her. On this

particular day however, she just wanted to be alone with her thoughts. She didn't think about too much at first, she just messed around with a Millennium Falcon toy she picked out at the store one time when she was out with Chief Hopper. She hadn't seen Star Wars yet, but she recognized the toy at the store because of how similar it was to one that Mike had in his basement. Most kids would play with it by pretending it was flying, but Eleven set it on the bed then actually made it fly. It sat hovering in the air in front of her, which had something of a therapeutic effect on her. She closed her eyes, and let herself be immersed in her thoughts.

She started thinking about Agent Carter and the very brief time she spent with him in January when he helped rescue her along with the chief. She couldn't find too much to think about on this topic because she really knew very little about him, so her brain moved away from him pretty quickly. For the next couple minutes, Eleven's brain went into overdrive as it went through all the things she wanted to think about. She blasted through her memories of the classes she had that day, to the other kids at school that were really quite nice to her, to some of the kids that weren't so nice to her and called her a weirdo behind her back for being more reserved than the others, but her mind finally settled where it usually did on thoughts of Mike.

The thing she thought about the most on this topic was back in November when just she and Mike were alone in the Hawkins Middle cafeteria. He had kissed her. She had no idea what it meant at the time, but while reading the story of 'Sleeping Beauty' in a book of fairy tales Nancy had gotten for her, she started to get an idea. She asked Joyce to explain it further and she said it was something you do with someone you really care about, someone you think of as 'more than a friend'. 'More than a friend' Eleven thought to herself. That was a phrase she heard a lot when she asked about kissing and things related to it, but she still wasn't exactly sure what it meant. She certainly had an idea of what it meant. She thought about how whenever Mike was in a room, she felt different. He made everything light up to her. She still didn't know exactly why he made her feel this way, but she assumed it had something to do with 'more than a friend'. On the other hand, Mike acted differently whenever Eleven was around. He would go timid and lose his place in his sentence if she entered the room while he was talking. Eleven didn't know why

this happened, but she thought maybe he felt embarrassed by something. Maybe the time he kissed her. 'Embarrassed' was a word Eleven had just learned and she felt it accurately represented what was happening to Mike. Since she had come back from the Upside Down, Mike hadn't talked to her about the kiss, or about the Snow-Ball (which she had learned had already happened while she was trapped in the Upside Down), so she assumed he didn't feel the same way any more. She decided that was OK with her, but something deep down told her that she wasn't.

"El? You OK?" Joyce asked, startling Eleven and causing the Millennium Falcon to fall out of the air and onto the bed. Eleven didn't expect Joyce to be home so soon, but then she looked at the clock next to her bed and noticed it was already almost 7. The second thing she noticed was that there was some blood coming out of her nose. Joyce noticed this too. "Let me get that for you." she said, walking over to the bed with a tissue in hand. "So... everything OK?" she asked once again. Eleven considered telling her that Agent Carter was back, but she remembered that she promised at Mike's house that she wouldn't tell anyone.

"Yeah, I just have some questions on my history homework." she said. Joyce smiled at how responsible her adopted daughter was, always enthusiastic with the schoolwork that her sons found boring. She went through the homework questions, and when Eleven was confident she got everything right, she cleaned up and helped Joyce start dinner. They had mac and cheese that night which usually made Will excited, but this time, he just sat and ate in silence. Eleven did too, but that was normal for her. She often preferred to listen to what other people had to say about their lives, which she found fascinating.

After dinner, they all cleaned up in silence, except for a few jokes that Jonathan made about how quiet they were. Eleven then brushed her teeth and went straight to bed. She tried to put all thoughts out of her mind and just go to sleep, but there were just so many of them. Eventually her mind did quiet down and she went to sleep with thoughts of Mike being the last ones she remembered before she passed out.

Eleven dreamed most nights, and this night was no exception. The

first thing she noticed were bright, florescent lights. Then she noticed the men carrying her. She was back in the bad place. She struggled to get free of their grip, but then they went through a big door and she was paralyzed by the sight of her papa. A sinister smile crept across his face and Eleven became scared. But then, she heard a loud bang and the big door behind her flew open. Mike came through and beat up both of the guards carrying her by himself. Eleven's mood changed and she began to smile as well as dream-Mike then turned his attention to the man in front of both of them. It only took one solid punch to knock him out and Eleven cheered a little when it did. Dream-Mike slowly turned around and walked towards Eleven. He swept her up in his arms, closed his eyes, and began to lean in. Eleven assumed he was preparing for another kiss, and she was happy with the idea as well. She followed suit, closed her eyes, and leaned in. Except, when she leaned in, there was nothing. She opened her eyes again and Didn't see Mike, she didn't see the hallway, or the guards, she just saw the void. This was the same place she would be sent to when her papa made her look for someone. There was nobody else there, and thankfully, no monster this time, but there was a voice;

"Eleven." the unidentified voice said. "Come home to us. Eleven..."

Mike's night wasn't anything too special. After everyone left, he decided to work on his homework, but was too distracted to do too much. What should have taken him about thirty minutes ended up taking two hours at which point his mother got home. She didn't like to disturb her son too much, but she could tell that something was wrong. She asked him about it, but he said it was nothing. Mike then tried to change his mood a little bit to hide the fact that there was something wrong, but it didn't do too much.

At 6:30, the entire family met downstairs and started dinner together. They ate in relative silence for a while until Mike's mom decided to get conversation started;

"I talked with Mrs. Sinclair today." she said. She often spent time with Lucas' mom. "She told me that Mr. Kaminsky won the lottery and quit yesterday." Mike almost did a spit take with the water he had in his mouth, but was able to control himself. He had never thought that

their parents could find out about their new chemistry teacher from other sources.

"What? That's strange." said Nancy from the other side of the table. While the fact that one of the teachers she had known for a while was gone because of some seemingly magic circumstance, she was more surprised that Mike hadn't said anything about it. They had been much more open with each other ever since the battle with the Demogorgon and this seemed like a thing Mike would get super excited about.

"Oh, yeah. Forgot to mention it." Mike said unconvincingly as he sunk down into his seat and focused on picking at his mashed potatoes. His parents looked at each other and silently decided to leave him alone for the time being and ask him more at some later point in time.

"Anything new with you, Nancy?" Karen asked.

"There's a new girl in my class." Nancy replied somewhat enthusiastically, trying to add a little bit of energy to the table. "Her name is Theresa, but she goes by Terri. She just moved from Colorado and apparently, school there hasn't started yet which is why she was all confused as to why she had missed two weeks already. I have English, math, biology, and like, two other classes with her. She is super nice and we spent a lot of time talking today."

"Well, that's good. How nice you are being to the new girl." Karen responded. This conversation continued a little longer, but Mike didn't really pay any attention.

When dinner was done, Karen and Nancy cleaned up the table and began to wash the dishes while Mike rushed upstairs, just wanting to go to bed. He brushed his teeth, said "goodnight" to everyone, then pulled himself under the blankets. He didn't have much of a dream while he slept, but he did remember hearing a small voice saying; "Come home to us, Eleven." over and over.

4. Chapter 4: The Pep Rally

The next couple of days were more or less normal. Neither Eleven or Mike mentioned the dreams they had. Eleven thought the dream was normal for her and Mike still wasn't entirely sure if he had actually heard the voice. Neither had any idea that the other had almost the exact same dream. The only thing that was different about their school days since Agent Carter showed up was that they would always stay in his classroom after the bell rang to ask if he had anything he could tell them. So far though, he had found out nothing.

The first sign that something was a little off came on Thursday in math. Mike thought it was unfair that both Eleven and him had math during the second period, but they had different teachers. He hadn't gotten much sleep all week and that finally got the best of him during one of the most boring lectures of his life. The teacher was sitting at the front of the room, drawing something on the board about the basics of linear functions when Mike put his head down and nodded off. He didn't think he had actually gotten to sleep because he could still hear and understand a math lesson about linear functions, but the voice of the teacher sounded slightly different.

"Mr. Wheeler!" he heard loudly. Mike was startled awake when he saw that the teacher was staring at him from the board, pointing to a problem on it. He thought quickly then said;

" $y = 2x - 3$?" The teacher opened her mouth, presumably to yell at him for getting it wrong, but she stopped herself and took a moment. She eventually said;

"That is the correct answer, but I haven't taught slope-intercept form yet. Good job for reading ahead in your book though." The teacher turned back to the board and continued teaching while Mike sat in shock. He hadn't read ahead in his book and could have sworn that the teacher had just explained it. He had heard an entire explanation of what he had just said in the short time he was asleep. After about five minutes, the teacher gave almost exactly the same explanation Mike had just heard, but he wasn't paying much attention.

The bell rang on the most confusing class Mike had ever had. The

material made perfect sense, but how he learned something ahead of the teacher saying it was beyond him. He headed out of the room and barely noticed when Dustin and Eleven met up with him on the way to chemistry. The other two notice that he was uncharacteristically quiet, but they didn't say anything about it.

They made it to chemistry class about a minute later, and as the rest of the group filed in, they all prepared themselves once again to be taught by a secret agent. Dr. Carter (who they learned actually had a doctorate in theoretical physics), was certainly not a bad teacher, in fact, he was one of the best they had. It was still strange to know that a secret government agent telling them about how to calculate pH. They had managed to get over the biggest part of the weirdness and they were able to take him seriously as a teacher. They took notes and answered in class, but it all still felt a little strange.

The class ended and everyone else quickly filed out to get to lunch. Dr. Carter went to the door, closed it and locked it, something he had only done before on his first day. He then turned to the table at the front of the room to see the five students he expected.

"I've been trying to get some information, any information out of the Hawkins lab, but so far, nothing." he began to explain as all the kids hung on every word he said. "I called over there a bunch of times, but they still say they are completely closed to everyone. Even more worryingly, the Westcliffe National Laboratory in Colorado just closed themselves off just as much as the Hawkins lab." Although everyone in the room had no idea what this meant, they knew what it could mean, and they didn't like it. "That's all I have right now, but I will keep you updated on this."

"Why?" asked Mike quickly. "Why the sudden interest in getting us in on this instead of telling us to do nothing?"

"Based on the combination the small amount of evidence I have and a feeling I have, I think Eleven might be involved in this somehow." Everyone took this moment to look at a very wide eyed and scared Eleven. She had just gotten a taste of what a normal life could be, she didn't want to lose it now.

The rest of the day was another that they spent in silence. They ate

their lunch and went to the rest of their classes, then they met after the last bell at the bike rack. Troy and James were nowhere to be seen, so they were free to talk a little bit. Mike suggested that they all needed some cheering up, so they should all come to his house and they would try to have some fun. They all agreed that this was a good idea, so they rode together, trying to laugh a little bit on the way.

Eleven always enjoyed the time she spent at Mike's house, but sometimes the boys could become a little too much. That's how she found herself in Nancy's room at about 6:00 that night. Nancy was working on some homework on her desk and Eleven was sitting on the bed, caught up in a book that Nancy lent her. It was a young teen book that Nancy had outgrown, but Eleven found it fascinating. It was about a girl who was just starting middle school and had to deal with new friends, harder classes, and most disturbing, boys. Eleven didn't understand how boys could be so much of a problem, all her closest friends were boys and that wasn't presenting any problems to her. She chose to ignore it for the moment and read further. But soon, she came to a word she didn't understand, so she spoke up;

"Nancy?" she called.

"Yeah?" Nancy responded, not looking up from her homework.

"What does 'crush' mean?" Eleven had heard this word before, but it had always referred to pressing on something until it got smaller, and the way the book was using it didn't seem to mean that at all.

"A crush is..." Nancy began to think, again without really looking up from her desk. "Someone who occupies your thoughts, someone you would like to think about as more than a friend." 'More than a friend', Eleven heard this phrase yet again.

"Like, someone you want to kiss?" she asked.

"Exactly." Nancy replied, still as focused as ever on her homework. She cracked a small smile and laughed to herself a little then started to talk again without really thinking. "You should know a lot about it, considering the size of crush Mike has on you." Her pencil stopped on

the page she was writing mid-letter and the smile on her face was replaced by that unique expression one makes when they realize they said something they probably shouldn't have.

"What?" Eleven asked, quite confused.

"Nothing. Forget I said anything." Nancy said quickly, spinning around in her chair to face Eleven.

"No seriously, what does that mean?" Eleven insisted on knowing. Nancy knew she screwed up, but she figured at this point it would be better to explain than leave her hanging.

"Have you seen the way Mike acts around you? How he acts differently when you come into the room?"

"Yeah."

"I am almost sure that is because he likes you."

"Why though? I like Mike and I don't act like that all the time I'm around him." Nancy laughed a little bit at this.

"Not like that. I think Mike thinks of you as more than a friend. He thinks of you as someone he would go out on a date with." Eleven was mostly sure she knew what a date was from watching TV with Joyce. She took a moment to imagine what a date with Mike would be like, she decided she liked the idea. This conversation continued for a little longer, but didn't really get anywhere new. After a couple of minutes, Nancy had to go back to her homework and Eleven went back to her book. She pretended to read, but she really just spent the time imagining what a date with Mike would be like.

Joyce called about an hour later and told Karen to tell Will and Eleven it was time to head home. They didn't talk too much on the ride home. They both wanted to get to know the other better, but the only thing they could think of that they had in common was the Upside Down and neither wanted to go back to those memories. They got home a little later and ate dinner as a family. They went to bed soon after. Eleven's thoughts didn't change so much that night. She instead chose to focus on Mike. She went back through the scenario

she had come up with while sitting on Nancy's bed of what would happen if she went on a date with Mike. The last thing she could remember before falling asleep was that she decided she had a crush on Mike too.

Her dream that night was all too familiar. She was back in the void, there was still nobody there but the voice she had heard a few nights before. The only difference this night was that it had something slightly different to say;

"Eleven. Come home to us." it began, like the first time. But then it started to say something different; "We know where you are. We know who is protecting you. We will get you back." That new addition made her even more scared. But, what could hurt her in a dream anyway?

Hawkins High School was small, but everyone in the town turned out when they had a big football game. Because of how small the town was, a large percentage of the students at the middle school cared about the games whether it was because of family, friends, or a combination. They were unique, as far as Mike knew, that the middle school students attended the high school pep rallies for the biggest games of the year. Since the homecoming game was that Friday, all classes at the end of the day were canceled and everyone was supposed to go to the high school gym to get pepped. Mike really couldn't care less about it most of the time. He didn't know anyone on the high school football team and really couldn't figure out why people found football interesting. This time was an exception though. Eleven was excited to figure out what 'football' was, so Mike was excited to spend some time with her while she learned. Everyone from both schools were loudly filing into the high school gym when Mike got there with Eleven. The rally was scheduled to start right after their 5th class of the day which the two of them had together, but they made plans with the others to sit together. Mike and Eleven finally got through a large crowd of people and to the center of the gym where Mike started looking around for Dustin, Lucas and Will. He didn't see them, but he did see Nancy with someone he didn't recognize. Nancy saw them as well, waved, then her and her friend walked over to Mike and Eleven.

"Hey guys! I mentioned Terri a couple of days ago at dinner. She's super nice and I thought you should meet her." Nancy said while smiling and pointing to the girl beside her.

"Hi. You must be Mike." Terri said, extending her hand.

"Hi Terri. Nancy says you're pretty cool." Mike said while taking her hand and giving it a friendly shake.

"I'm flattered." she said, taking a quick look at Nancy. "Is this Elle?" she asked, looking to the girl next to Mike.

"Yes it is." Mike said, but the smile left his face when he noticed Eleven had her head in her hands. "Is something wrong, El?" He asked, a little worried.

"Bad." was all she managed to say.

"It looks like she's getting a migraine." Nancy said, almost sure it wasn't a migraine.

"Yeah, you're probably right." Mike responded without looking away from Eleven. He also knew it wasn't a migraine, but he knew what Nancy was trying to do by saying it was. "You guys have fun at the rally. El should probably get out of here." he said to Nancy and Terri. "Let's get you some water." he said to Eleven.

They left the gym. There were a couple of teachers making sure none of the students were doing anything too bad and they all tried to turn Mike and Eleven back towards the gym. A little explaining got them out of it, and they headed straight for a water fountain. Eleven took a big long drink.

"Are you feeling any better?" Mike asked her.

"No. Something bad." she slowly replied. It made him even more worried that she wasn't able to talk as well as she normally could.

"I think it's time we saw Dr. Carter." Mike said as he took Eleven's hand and they turned back towards the middle school.

They were a little slow heading to the middle school because Eleven was still in some pain. Dr. Carter was one of the last teachers still in the school, most of them were at the high school for the rally, but Carter made it clear he had no interest in pep rallies, or simply football for that matter. They got to his door and heard something loud from inside that made Mike stop for a moment;

"What! No! I want to talk to Dr. Stevens." they heard Dr. Carter yelling through the door, presumably into the phone. "What do you mean Dr. Stevens doesn't work there anymore?" There was a pause. "Well, transfer me to whoever has his position." Another pause. "Listen here. I am a special agent with a very secret agency. So secret you probably have never heard of us before, but if you go to your secret files and look up... NO! Don't hang up on me!" Mike could tell where the call was going and figured it was probably fine to open the door. He did and slowly led Eleven into the chemistry room as Carter put the handset of the phone back on the base with some force.

"What was that all about?" Mike asked.

"I finally got on the phone with someone at the lab, but they hung up on me."

"Yeah, we heard that through the wall. Not all that secret for a secret agent if you ask me."

"Well... I was trying to make my point." was all Agent Carter could think of as a response before changing the subject. "What are you two doing here? Shouldn't you be at your screaming-for-sports thing?" he said, expressing how much he really didn't care about football.

"We were there, then Eleven got some sort of headache." Mike said while Eleven sat down at one of the desks. She seemed to be doing a little better, but she still didn't seem her normal self.

"That sounds like a problem for the school nurse." Carter replied very simply.

"No." said Eleven, her head still in her hands.

"No? What do you mean by 'no'?" Carter asked. Eleven looked up, her

face was completely white.

"No, they wouldn't understand." she was still speaking very slowly, but the confidence in language she had learned over the past year was returning. "It wasn't just a headache. I felt something. Something... like me. Someone tried to get into my head." Mike got scared when she said this, it had never come to his mind that there could be others like her. Agent Carter, however, just appeared interested.

"Has anything else out of the ordinary been happening recently?" he asked. Eleven was about to say no, but she took a moment to think.

"I heard a voice in my sleep." she began after going through the past couple days' events in her mind. "I heard it a couple days ago too and I thought it was just a memory from the lab, but I heard it again last night. I was so sure it was speaking to me, not just something in my mind." It took her a long time to formulate all the words, but she ended up satisfied with how she phrased it.

"Interesting." Carter said, then he got a big notebook out of his briefcase. "Could you identify the voice? Could you tell who was talking?"

"No, I could just remember what it said."

"And, what did it say?"

"Something like; 'Eleven, come back. We know where you are.'" Carter took a bunch of notes in his notebook. When he was done, he looked up. He was ready to ask Eleven another question, but Mike caught his attention. He was standing in the corner of the room with some of the widest eyes that Agent Carter had ever seen.

"Is something wrong, Mr. Wheeler?" he asked.

"No. Yes. Maybe." said Mike, correcting himself a couple of times pretty rapidly while he tried to figure out exactly what to say. "It's just... last night, and Monday... I heard the same thing in my sleep." Carter took off his glasses when he heard this. The glasses didn't actually have prescription lenses, he just wore them to disguise

himself a little bit in his long term assignment, but it felt right to him that they should be taken off when he heard Mike.

"Interesting." was all he could say to that.

A/N: I have been posting really often recently because I am super excited about this story, and the year is kind of winding down for me so I have a lot of free time. I will continue to write a lot and new chapters will probably be coming at a similar frequency for now, but please don't come to expect that as the norm.

Also, please review. I am using this as a way to improve my creative writing and would love to hear what people think of the story as well as the grammar and such.

5. Chapter 5: The Crash

Mike and Eleven spent the rest of the pep rally in Dr. Carter's classroom. After it was over, Eleven was feeling a little better, so they went over to the high school to find Lucas, Dustin and Will. The group decided they would start off the weekend with a game of Dungeons and Dragons at Mike's house. Even though she still didn't know exactly how to play Dungeons and Dragons, Eleven came along too. She liked watching them play (something she had done a lot since she had gotten back from the Upside Down), but the real reason she was going with to Mike's house was to talk to Nancy again. Things seemed different since she had learned what a 'crush' was. Things didn't feel bad, in fact, they felt pretty good. There was just something different that she couldn't put her finger on.

When they arrived at Mike's house, they learned that Nancy was already there, having been driven home from the pep rally. Eleven made her way upstairs and knocked on Nancy's door.

"Who's there?" came Nancy's voice through the door.

"It's me." Eleven replied. This was a reply to the question of 'who's there' that Eleven had mainly learned from watching TV. She found that once someone knew her well and could recognize her voice, that was all they needed.

"Come on in." said Nancy. Eleven turned the knob and slowly opened the door to find Nancy sitting on her bed with Terri.

"Oh. Hi, Terri." She didn't expect to see her there, but she also considered this as a good second chance to introduce herself after the first time she tried at the pep rally didn't go so well. "I'm Elle." she said, using the name that Joyce said to introduce herself with. "Sorry about what happened at school. It hadn't happened before."

"Oh, that's perfectly OK." said Terri while smiling. "I get headaches sometimes too. I understand what that was like for you." Eleven was sure that she didn't entirely understand, but she also decided it would probably be best not to try to explain.

"I'm sorry to intrude like this..." Eleven said, 'intrude' being another one of the words she had just learned. "But I was wondering if I could talk to Nancy for a moment."

"Oh. Of course. I'll get out of your way." Terri said, quickly getting up from the bed. "Nancy... where's your bathroom?"

"Just down the hall and to the left." Nancy replied while pointing to indicate the general direction Terri should go.

"Thanks." Terri said while somewhat quickly heading out the door.

"Feel free to grab a snack from the kitchen when you're done." Nancy yelled after her. "Now, what's up with you?" she asked, turning to Eleven.

"I'm really sorry to interrupt..." Eleven began.

"Not a problem at all. I know that you wouldn't come in if it wasn't important." Nancy said quickly. Eleven took a moment to consider how important her question was, then decided to continue regardless of if it was or not. Nancy would understand.

"It's just..." she began, trying to pick out just the right words to express exactly what she was feeling. "Mike... and me..." She was still struggling to get her ideas out, but Nancy saw where this was going.

"Did you think about the fact that he has a crush on you?" she asked to try to get the conversation moving.

"Yes, I thought about it a lot. I decided that I also have a crush on him." Nancy smiled when she heard this. "I really like being around him. But... he always acts so strange, I am wondering if it is because he is embarrassed about the time he kissed me." The smile melted off Nancy's face and was replaced with horrified surprise.

"What? He kissed you? When?"

"Last November. When we were in the school and you and Jonathan went to the house to fight the monster." Nancy looked out the door to make sure Terri hadn't heard anything about the monster, then she took a little bit before she said anything else.

"Well..." she tried to start, but now it was her turn to struggle for words. "I would imagine he is a little embarrassed." She decided to put out of her mind for a moment that they were talking about her brother and instead just help Eleven with her problem. "I think it is because he doesn't know what you think of him. He thinks you think he is just one of your normal friends, but you need to show him that he means more to you." Eleven thought she was beginning to understand, but wasn't completely sure.

"So... what should I do?"

"Well..." Nancy thought about this for a moment. "Has he told you about anything special to him? Something you could do together?" It didn't take Eleven long before she thought of an answer.

"Right before he kissed me, he mentioned something called the Snow-Ball, but I have no idea what that is." Nancy took a moment to laugh at how inexperienced her brother was at this sort of thing.

"It's a cheesy school dance."

"He used that exact same word to describe it. Is there a lot of cheese there?" Eleven asked. "I like mac and cheese when Joyce makes it." she said, trying to help. This caused Nancy to laugh again.

"That's not what it means in this context." she said, trying not to laugh too hard. "It means... It is kind of stupid, kind of dumb." Eleven was confused. She knew the definitions of 'stupid' and 'dumb' and they weren't good things.

"Why would Mike ask me to go to something stupid and dumb?" Eleven asked, confused as ever.

"Because, as stupid and dumb it is, it's still something fun to do with someone you really like." Nancy said being purely honest. "When I was in middle school, I never got asked to the Snow-Ball, but I really wish I did. I think if you mention it to Mike, he will be happy you did." Eleven smiled and gave Nancy a big hug. She was getting ready to leave when Nancy started talking again. "Just, a couple of things. First, be insistent." Eleven didn't know that last word, but she let Nancy carry on. "If I know Mike, he's going to try to chicken out and

talk you out of going to the dance. But believe me, both of you will be happy if you don't let him do that. Secondly, and I can't believe I'm saying this, don't mention it to him in front of the other guys. If they hear about it, they will make fun of him about it."

"Why?" asked Eleven.

"The best answer for that is probably just; because they're boys." Eleven thanked Nancy once again and went quickly out of the room. She found Terri in the kitchen when she got downstairs. She apologized once again but Terry insisted it was OK and just said again that it was nice to meet her.

Back in the basement, the Dungeons and Dragons game was going at full swing, and continued so for a little bit. Will was the first to leave. Joyce came by and picked him up for a doctor's appointment at about 5. She said that she could take Eleven too, but Eleven insisted she would be fine riding her bike back home by herself later. At about 6:00, Nancy and Terri came downstairs to say goodbye, they were going to the homecoming game. After that, Dustin's mom called and told him that he needed to come, Lucas' mom called and said basically the same thing. By 6:30, only Mike and Eleven were left in the basement.

Eleven couldn't believe her luck, this was her chance to ask Mike about the Snow-Ball.

"Hey, Mike?" she asked.

"Yeah?" he passively replied while cleaning up the Dungeons and Dragons materials from the table. Eleven found it hard for some reason to say what she wanted to. While she worked up the courage she needed, Mike put the Dungeons and Dragons stuff on the shelf and picked up a couple of half-full soda cans on the table.

"Remember last year when you asked me to go to the Snow-Ball with you?" Mike dropped the cans when he heard Eleven. A lot of thoughts ran through his head, but the only one he paid attention to for some reason was: 'It's going to be hard to clean the soda out of the carpet.' He then looked down expecting to see some big, sugary stains on the

floor, but he instead saw the cans floating about 6 inches from the ground, nothing having come out of them.

"Thanks." he said awkwardly as he plucked the cans out of the air and got them to the trash can, almost tripping on the way. He then went back and sat down next to Eleven to have a conversation that he was very scared to have. Eleven sat patiently as Mike tried to figure out what he should say. "What was that you said?" he asked. He mentally kicked himself immediately after, that wasn't the best thing he could have said.

"In the cafeteria, last year, while Lucas and Dustin got..." she stopped for a moment to think of the word. "...pudding." She paused for a moment, as if to give him some time to remember what she was talking about. "You told me you wanted to go to the Snow-Ball."

"Oh, yeah." Mike managed to say. "Well... it was a stupid suggestion." Everything that came out of Mike's mouth was accompanied by more mental kicking.

"No, it wasn't." Eleven said in a calm, reassuring voice. "I want to go." Mike quickly turned his head to look at her.

"Really?" he said, his voice a little too high-pitched and excited. He shook his head quickly and started over again; "Really?" he said again, this time in a more normal voice. Eleven smiled and almost laughed about how nervous Mike was. She had seen him fight off a monster that had taken his friend, but she still thought he was more stressed out in this moment than back then.

"Yes." Eleven said to try to get him to calm down a little bit. "I really wanted to go...with you." Mike once again racked his brain looking for the right words.

"Well... it's coming up again this December." He said, having to force himself to get out the right words. "We could go this year." Eleven thought that was a good idea, but she still didn't think it was enough.

"I wanted to do something a little sooner... with you." She said, confident by now that she was saying the right things. Mike knew what he wanted all this to mean, but he thought there was no way

Eleven knew what she was talking about. He put this idea out of his mind almost immediately. She knew much more than he gave her credit for a lot of the time. Then, he remembered all the time Eleven had been spending with Nancy in the past few days. His first thought was that Nancy was messing with him through Eleven, but he dismissed that as well because it was a ridiculous idea. Nancy had been much more considerate of him since they fought the monster together, but most of all, she would never use Eleven for anything. Nancy loved Eleven like a sister. Not the kind of sister you ever have a fight with, but the kind of sister you love above all else and would do anything for. Mike knew in this moment what Eleven was trying to say, and it didn't take him long to decide his answer.

"Yes." was all he said at first. "Yes, I want to... do something with you."

"Like a date?" Eleven asked, hopefully.

"Yes. Like a date." Mike responded without having to think about the answer. They both smiled at each other. Mike stared into Eleven's eyes and she stared back. Their faces moved closer together. Mike closed his eyes and Eleven quickly followed his lead. They were almost touching when the phone rang upstairs. It startled them and they jumped back from each other, laughing once they realized what had happened. Karen picked up the phone and was only talking on it for about 30 seconds before she opened the basement door and called down.

"Elle, Joyce called. She said you should start biking home."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler." Eleven called back, just a moment later.

"Mike, it's time for you to come up for dinner." She called down after that.

"OK, mom. I'll be right up." Mike yelled, not taking his eyes off of Eleven. Eleven turned her head back to Mike, not actually wanting to leave.

"Tomorrow?" she asked.

"Tomorrow." Mike replied, promising that none of this was over. Eleven turned to the door and started walking out before turning around and giving Mike a quick kiss on the lips.

"Tomorrow." she said once again. She looked Mike in the eye again for a moment before turning around and practically running out the door. Mike stood at the bottom of the stairs and whispered to himself;

"Tomorrow."

Mike was as stunned as he ever was. He had no idea how long he was actually standing at the bottom of the stairs after Eleven left, but his mother had to call for him again.

"Why did I have to call you a second time?" she asked when he did eventually make it up the stairs and into the kitchen. "Do I have to be worried what you and Elle are doing down there all by yourselves?" she asked jokingly.

"No." Mike answered, too quickly. Karen looked at him suspiciously for a moment, but ultimately dismissed the ideas going around in her head of what her son was doing with the slightly strange girl who had become one of his best friends. She didn't know entirely who Eleven was, so she called her 'Elle' like everyone else that didn't know where she came from. Nancy usually helped set the table, but she was at the football game so Mike did it instead. His father came downstairs, and they all sat down to eat. Karen noticed that Mike was eating a lot and seemed really happy, but strangely, he wasn't talking too much.

"How was the pep rally today?" she asked, trying to get a conversation rolling.

"I don't know. I wasn't there." he replied without looking up from the mountain of food he was shoveling in his mouth.

"Why weren't you there?" Mike's dad, Ted, asked. He knew Mike wasn't the type to skip out on school, but he was still curious, especially considering how differently he had been acting as of late.

"El had a headache, so I stayed with her outside so she didn't have to deal with all the noise." Mike said, slowing down his eating a little bit to formulate his answers so he wasn't lying, but was avoiding saying the whole truth. Karen and Ted looked at each other, trying to decide if they were concerned in any capacity by Mike's relationship with his only friend that was a girl. They didn't come to any conclusions so they just decided to leave the matter alone for the time being.

Mike was saved from having to say much else during dinner by his younger sister, Holly. She was at the only age in her life where she could say as much as she wanted and nobody would yell her for it. The opposite was true. As she went through some disjointed stories about her time at pre-K and Karen just encouraged her to say more throughout the entire meal. Eventually, they were all finished. Mike enthusiastically helped clean up. He got ready for bed, quickly said goodnight, then lay awake in his bed, occupied with thoughts of Eleven.

Eleven ran out the door to Mike's basement and picked up her bike. She was filled with so much excitement that the slight hill she had to go up to get home felt like nothing. Once she got to the top of the hill, she could let gravity take her on the rest of her journey. She was going down the biggest drop on the route, letting the wind go through her short, but getting longer hair and thought that nothing could bring her down. But then it hit her. She felt a sharp pain in her head and lost control of the bike. She fell off and was flying towards the pavement when she tried to use her powers to catch herself. It worked, to an extent. She slowed down at the last moment and fell straight on her bottom. She sat on the road for a moment to try to get her thoughts together, then she realized that it was probably dangerous to stay where she was. She forced herself to get up, grabbed her bike and walked the rest of the way home. It was only about ten minutes longer before she opened the door and Joyce smiled to greet her before seeing her hands.

"What happened?" she asked, rushing over to Eleven to get a closer look.

"I fell off the bike." Eleven said, choosing not to mention the pain that was still very much raging in her head.

"Good thing you were wearing your helmet. It looks like you hit your head pretty hard." Joyce said, trying to find the best side of the situation.

"What?" asked Eleven in confusion. "I didn't hit my head at all."

"Well then... why is your nose bleeding?"

6. Chapter 6: The Date

Eleven took a lot of time the next morning to wake up. She decided pretty early on in the school year that she didn't like mornings, and this one was no exception. The headache had gone away after a little bit in the last night, but it kept her awake and she got to sleep pretty late. Eleven rolled over on her side and opened one eye to look at the clock next to her bed. It took a moment for her eyes to focus, but she was eventually to read 12:27 PM. Eleven's other eye shot open and she had a moment of panic before remembering that it was a Saturday and that she wasn't really late for school. She did decide that it was late enough and there was no point in trying to get back to sleep, though. She got up and gained some more energy as she started to move and get dressed. She eventually opened the door and went into the hall. The first thing she saw was Joyce sitting at the kitchen table, reading a book. Joyce heard some footsteps and noticed that Eleven was finally awake.

"Good morning, sleepyhead." She smiled at her small joke, but chose to ignore it once she saw that Eleven didn't fully understand it. "Mike called this morning at 8:30 asking to talk to you." Eleven smiled a little once she heard this. Even though the headache was almost the only thing she was able to think about once it struck, Mike never completely left her thoughts. "I told him that you were still sleeping and that I would have you call him as soon as you were up, but despite having said that he still called two more times." The phone rang as soon as she was finished talking. "I would bet any amount of money that's him right now." she said while standing up to go get the phone. She walked over to the small table with the phone on it and picked up the handset. "Hello... She actually just got up." Joyce covered the microphone for a moment and said; "El, Mike is wondering if you're free to talk. I could tell him you'll call back a little later when you've had some time to wake up if you want."

"No. I want to talk now." Eleven said, walking over to Joyce and holding her hand out to take the phone.

"Here you go." Joyce said, giving the handset to Eleven. "I'll go make you something to eat while you talk." She walked over to the kitchen

while Eleven put the phone to her ear.

"Hello." she said.

"Hi El!" came Mike's voice on the other end of the line. "How's it going?" She considered telling him about her headache, but decided against it because he would just worry and she wanted to have a nice time with him.

"It is going good." Eleven eventually replied. "What did you want to talk about?" she said a moment later.

"Um..." Mike was struggling again to say what he wanted to which made Eleven smile. "Do you want to do something today... with me?"

"Just you or with the others too?" asked Eleven, which caught Mike off guard a little.

"Well... the others can come too if you want, but..."

"No." Eleven interrupted. "I want it to be just us." She looked into the kitchen and saw that Joyce wasn't paying attention to anything she was saying to Mike. She was instead distracted by trying to work the new kitchen mixer she had just bought to make some pancakes.

"How about..." Mike paused a moment to think of just the right thing to suggest. "What about we meet on the big field behind the school at 4?"

"What would we be doing."

"Surprise." was all Mike said. That was all it took to make Eleven excited.

"OK, promise." Eleven said, unable to accurately express how excited she was.

"Promise." Mike said in response. Eleven heard another voice on the phone, but it was much quieter than Mike's. "That was my mom." Mike said. "She says she has to use the phone so I have to get off the line. See you at 4 though."

"See you at 4." Eleven repeated back to him. She heard a small click from the other end of the line as Mike set down the phone, she set down her end soon after, then walked back into the kitchen.

"What did Mike want to talk about?" Joyce asked, trying desperately to slow down the mixer so flour would stop flying out of it.

"We made plans for today." Eleven said, blinking rapidly as an airborne speck of flour got in her eye.

"Well, Will can't come along with you guys. He has a dentist appointment." Joyce had a habit of planning every doctor and dentist appointment in the family in the span of about one weekend. It was nice that she could get everything out of the way in one go, but it meant that that weekend was jam packed. Will had already had his doctor's appointment the day before, now it was his and Jonathan's turns for the dentist. Eleven already knew that the next day she would have to go to both the doctor and the dentist, but it didn't matter to her in that moment. After much fighting with kitchen appliances, Joyce was finally done making Eleven's pancakes. They were some of the worst pancakes that the town of Hawkins had ever seen, but Eleven didn't notice. She was wrapped up in imagining what Mike had planned for them.

Joyce and Will left the house at about 2:30 and Eleven left at 3. She knew it was probably too early to leave, but she was just too excited. She hopped on her bike and rode as fast as she could towards the school. She made it to the bike rack and locked up her bike just as another person made it to the school.

"Hi." said the other person. Eleven looked up to see the Mike had just arrived. "What are you doing here so early?"

"I got excited." she replied honestly, but still for some reason, she was a little embarrassed.

"Me too." Mike said. Eleven noticed while Mike locked up his bike that he had a big backpack with him.

"What is in your backpack?" Eleven asked.

"Your surprise." Mike smiled and offered his hand to Eleven. He noticed that she had some big red scrapes on her hand when she reached out to take his. "What happened to your hand?" he asked, a little worried.

"I fell off my bike." Eleven quickly replied. Mike expressed his sympathies but didn't think too much more of it. He led her out to the far edge of the field and stopped in the shade of a big tree. He opened the backpack and pulled out a big blanket that he set down on the grass, then pulled a bunch of Tupperware containers out. Eleven had read about picnics before in some books (mainly the ones that Nancy had) and she always wanted to have one. She had mentioned this to Mike in April or May and she had almost forgotten about it, but it seemed Mike hadn't. Eleven smiled and they began to eat. Mike seemed nervous, but Eleven didn't understand why. He opened his mouth a couple of times to talk, but never said anything. Eventually he did; "Do you like it?" Eleven was a little confused by this question. Of course she liked it. Why would Mike think she wasn't? But then she noticed how nervous he looked. She smiled, took his hand and said;

"Yes. It's perfect." 'Perfect' wasn't a word she used often, but she felt it was the best one she could use at that moment. Mike seemed to relax a little bit at this, but not completely. Eleven saw he was still a little anxious so she decided to try something. She took his hand and looked straight into his eyes. He looked straight into her eyes as well and all his fear seemed to melt away. They began to lean in closer to each other. Mike was very aware for most of the picnic that anyone could come and see him on a date with a girl. He was aware that if Lucas or Dustin saw it, they would make fun of him until the day he died. He was kind of scared of what would happen if Troy were to see them and he wasn't sure what would happen if Will, Jonathan or Nancy saw them. But the moment Eleven's lips pressed up against his, he didn't care about anything but her.

Mike and Eleven didn't think the rest of the weekend wasn't as good as their picnic. They had to help with chores when they got home, then on Sunday, Eleven had to spend the most day at the doctor and dentist. Mike spent most of his Sunday with Dustin, Will and Lucas.

Sunday evening was the worst however. They had both completely forgotten that they had any homework until about 6:30 in the afternoon. For the rest of the evening, Eleven got help from Joyce on her homework and Mike got a lecture on procrastination from Karen.

The next day, Mike and Eleven met up in English class and chose to just look at each other instead of talking until the bell rang. Mike found it hard to pay attention in class with the girl he cared so much about sitting right next to him. Eleven, on the other hand, still found school new and interesting and had no problem taking notes, except for the few times during the class that she caught Mike staring at her, causing her to blush.

Second period was a little easier for both of them. Eleven payed attention, like always, and Mike tried extra hard not to fall asleep again. He didn't trust his dreams to get him through another close call like last time. The bell rang and Mike ran to Dr. Carter's room to get there before Eleven. He smiled at her as she came in the door. The rest of their group knew deep down that there was something different about Mike and Eleven, but they didn't mention it. The bell rang again, signaling the start of class and Dr. Carter walked in the room and began teaching. There was something different about him during that lesson. His teaching style was still unique, but he lacked a lot of the enthusiasm he usually had about him. The class wasn't as engaging as everyone had come to expect so it seemed to take forever. The bell finally did ring, everyone got up and left the classroom a little quicker than usual, except for the group that always stayed of course.

"Is something wrong?" asked Lucas as soon as Dr. Carter had locked the door. He took a little while to walk over to the table that they all stood at.

"I was thinking about what Eleven told me on Friday." he began. "She said that when she got her headache, it was because of 'something like her'. I know that whenever Eleven uses her powers, she gives off very small but measurable amounts of electromagnetic radiation. I ordered some precision measuring equipment to try to find out the source of whatever caused the incident at the pep rally. I was going to ask you guys to stay behind today so Eleven could help me calibrate it, but it didn't come."

"I thought your secret agency got everything out to you guys super fast." Lucas piped in once again. Carter took a deep breath before starting again.

"They do, and that was strange to me, so I called the agency last night." he sat down on a stool behind the table and took a short break before continuing, as if to prepare himself for what he was about to say. "There was a break-in at Coalition headquarters in New York. Whoever got in killed all the armed guards that were there and stole all the files we have on the secret projects of America's national laboratories. That includes all the files we have on Dr. Brenner's work." The room went dead silent once this fact came out. They all knew that whoever broke into the agency knew who and where Eleven was. Carter noticed the mood among the group was pretty poor so he decided to continue on; "They told me the equipment I ordered should be here by tomorrow. Would you guys mind staying behind to help me calibrate it?" The response from the kids was generally a 'yes', but it was obvious that they still hadn't gotten over the initial shock from hearing about the break-in. "OK then, that's all I have today." Carter said. He stood up and went to go unlock the door before Eleven stopped him.

"Wait." she said. Carter stopped dead in his tracks and everyone immediately turned their heads to Eleven out of surprise. Carter returned to his place behind the table and concentrated intensely on what Eleven said next. "It happened again."

"What happened again?" asked Mike, fear permeating his voice.

"The headache. It felt the same as it felt at the rally." Eleven looked down at the table as if she was ashamed of what she just said. Mike began to nervously pace around next to the group while everyone else waited for what Eleven would say next. "I was riding home from Mike's house and I felt it again. I fell off the bike and I didn't hit my head, but when I got home my nose was bleeding." The last bit of her confession was the most worrying to the others. A nose-bleed was one of the most common signs that she had used her powers to a strenuous extent, but as far as Eleven could tell, she didn't use them.

"I have some theories, but I need the equipment to test them." Carter said. "Does anyone else have anything to say while we're here?"

Nobody spoke up. "You all know how to contact me at school." he said, indicating the phone on his desk. He grabbed a sheet of paper off the desk and wrote down a number on it. He gave the paper to Eleven and said; "This is my home telephone number. If it happens again, call me and tell me all the details you can." He went over to the door and unlocked it. "Do me a favor and try to cheer up. OK?" he said to the kids while they left the classroom. This suggestion seemed ridiculous, but Mike saw how bad Eleven was feeling and decided to do just what Carter had told them.

Mike spent the lunch period forgetting about all the scary things they heard in the chemistry classroom and instead made a bunch of jokes in an attempt to get the others to do the same. For about ten minutes, he had no success but eventually, one by one the others started to smile. Eleven was so happy that Mike cared so much that she forgot for a moment that she had to spend the next period in a class with none of her friends.

Eleven got into history class and sat down in her normal spot in the second row. On the first day, she didn't have any friends in the class with her to sit next to so she just sat down in the spot that had the least people already sitting there. By the time the bell rang, most of the seats around her had been filled by a group of three girls that she didn't know. The girls were not the most popular, but they certainly weren't unpopular. They knew that Eleven was the new girl in school and tried to talk to her. Eleven was a little timid talking with people she didn't know at all, but the girls were nice to her so she decided to try to make friends with them. A couple people Eleven knew (Nancy and Joyce mainly) said it would be good for her if she made some friends with girls as well as the boys. The girls were already in the middle of a conversation;

"I really can't believe he did that!" one of the girls named Sarah said. The three of them sat down in their normal seats and Sarah turned to Eleven. "Elle, what do you think of Troy?" Eleven didn't have to think long about her answer to this question.

"He's a stupid mouth-breather." confidently replied.

"Yes, exactly." Sarah said, turning to the other two girls. "I couldn't

have said it better myself."

"What did he do?" Eleven asked. She could think of a lot of reasons why someone might be mad at Troy, but she had no idea why these girls were angry with him. One of the other girls named Lucy replied;

"He stole my little brother's bike and wouldn't give it back." she said angrily. "My brother is only about a year younger than us and Troy knows he would never fight back. My parents went over to his house on Saturday to ask about it but they said nobody answered the door." Lucy stewed in her anger for a moment while the others continued to complain about Troy.

"You know he broke his arm last year, right?" the other girl, Amy, asked rhetorically. "He made up some story that some girl at the quarry broke it telepathically, but I think he just doesn't want to admit he was so stupid that fell over onto a rock." All the girls started laughing at this, Eleven for a different reason than the others.

The bell rang and the history class started. This was a topic that was particularly fascinating for Eleven. She had no idea that human history could be so complex and interesting. The teacher was a little strange and Eleven didn't catch some of the times he was making deadpan jokes, but she caught on pretty quickly when the other students would laugh at certain points during a lecture. On that day, they were learning about the events leading up to the American Revolution. Eleven paid close attention and took a lot of notes in the bright pink notebook she had bought at the beginning of the year.

The class eventually came to an end and Eleven quickly stood up, ready to leave and go to her next class like always.

"Hey, Elle! Wait up!" called Sarah. Eleven stopped and turned to see what she had to say. "Friday, after school we're having a sleepover at my house. Would you like to come?" Eleven took a moment to think about that question. It held a lot more complexity to her than it would any other person. She knew what a sleepover was, Nancy had explained it to her a couple of months prior when they were talking about what girls normally do for fun. Eleven thought it would be fun, but she also thought about all the uncertainty surrounding Agent Carter's return and the mysterious headaches and the voice in her

dream. She took all the factors into account and the answer came out as;

"Maybe. I will have to talk to my mom first."

"OK. That's great. We would love to have you, but if you can't make it, we should do something else together sometime." Sarah, Lucy and Amy stood up and walked out of the room while smiling and saying goodbye to Eleven. Eleven left the room soon after and headed out to her next class.

She met up with Mike after school and they walked together towards the bike racks. She told him that she got asked to a sleepover, and what Troy did to Lucy's brother and he simply listened to her. It made her feel good that he would sometimes be happy just to hear what she had to say. He nodded along as they got to the bikes and he heard the last thing he wanted to hear;

"Hey, frog-face." Troy's voice came from behind him. Mike was amazed that the 'frog-face' nickname that Troy came up with still amused the idiot as much as it did. "How's your girlfriend." Troy emphasized the last word of the sentence and laughed to himself at how funny he thought he was. Mike turned around to see Troy approaching with the ever present James. Normally, Mike would just try to ignore them and leave, but with Eleven by his side, something inside of him told him that he needed to be strong in this moment.

"Hey, Troy." he said confidently. "El was just telling me about how you stole Lucy's brother's bike. Why were you too chicken to answer the door when her parents came to ask you about it?" Troy was surprised that Mike fought back this time. He was so surprised that he didn't say anything for a while so James took the opportunity to say something.

"For your information, frog-face... Troy here spent the whole weekend in New York." he said, spitting a little bit as he did. "And what did you do this weekend, idiot? You spend time with your girlfriend?" Mike wasn't sure how to answer that question. He was happy of the time he got to spend with Eleven, but he was still a young kid and was embarrassed to say it out loud. Fortunately for him, he didn't have to say anything. He instead saw Troy coming

from the side winding up for a punch. Normally, Mike would be scared and try to block it, but he was had more courage this time than ever before. He simply stood there, ready to take whatever came his way. But the punch never connected. Troy slipped and fell flat on his face while walking over to Mike. Mike couldn't believe his luck until he turned to Eleven and saw her wiping her nose. He then saw a small red stain on the end of her sleeve. The two smiled at each other in the way that two people smile at each other when they are the only ones that know the full story to something. Troy was very embarrassed by his failure. He angrily stood up and walked away right in between Mike and Eleven, bumping into both of them as he did. Mike's feeling of victory went away when Eleven crumbled to the ground right after Troy ran into her. The mysterious pain had hit her again.

7. Chapter 7: The Sleepover

Mike picked up Eleven and carried her to Dr. Carter's classroom (something he wasn't strong enough to do a year before). All of them noticed that Eleven's nose was slowly bleeding until the pain subsided. They determined that without Carter's precision measuring equipment, there was nothing much they could do at the moment, so once Eleven was feeling better, she left with Mike.

Nobody else was at the bike racks by the time they got there, so Mike and Eleven were able to unlock their bikes in peace. Mike accompanied Eleven home to make sure she was OK, then he turned back and went back to his own house. The rest of the evening was pretty boring. Mike spent most of it in his room working on homework while Nancy talked with Terri one room over. Mike didn't talk much to Nancy before their whole ordeal with the monster, so he never really got to know Barb too well. Now though, he talked with Nancy more and found out that Terri was actually a really nice person. He was happy that Nancy finally found a good friend to spend time with.\

When Eleven got home, she decided to ask Joyce if going to the sleepover with Sarah, Lucy and Amy. Eleven was going to confess about the headaches she had been getting recently and ask if it was a good idea to go, but as soon as she mentioned a sleepover with other girls, Joyce just went on and on about how good of an idea that was. Eleven just decided to stick with that answer instead of getting Joyce worried about what had been happening to her.

The next day of school seemed as normal as ever. Dr. Carter was back to being an enthusiastic teacher which made everyone feel a little better. After chemistry class, they all stayed behind like normal. Carter locked the door, and then turned to the kids with a big weird smile on his face.

"They came." he said. He pulled out a bunch of boxes from behind the desk and began opening them like a kid on Christmas. He spent the next couple of minutes setting a bunch of big pieces of equipment out on the table and messing with the wires to get them all powered. The kids took out their lunches, sat down in some desks near the front,

and began eating. It raised all their spirits to see the person they only knew as a serious secret agent acting so much like a child at the prospect that he got to use some new toys. After about ten minutes, he announced; "OK. Let's get to work."

Carter and Eleven spent most of the rest of the lunch period working while the others watched. Carter had Eleven do a bunch of things with her powers while he fiddled with knobs, read off some displays, and wrote things down. They went through a lot of tissues to keep Eleven's nosebleeds under control, but she never seemed to mind it.

"It looks like I have everything I need." Carter said. The others perked up at the thought that they might finally have something to give them answers. "I still don't know what the readings are going to look like whenever you get another one of your headaches so you need to tell me immediately when it happens again so I can calibrate for that." Eleven agreed, showed that she still had Carter's home phone number, then they all left the room just as the bell rang.

In History class, Eleven told the group of girls that she would be happy to go to the sleepover with them. They were all so excited and spend the remainder of the time before the bell rang jumping around and talking about how much fun it was going to be. Eleven was a little scared about spending a night with people that she didn't know too well, but then she thought about how nice they were to her and she just started feeling excited.

The rest of the week was uneventful. Eleven didn't have any more headaches (or 'attacks' as they had decided to call them because it seemed more descriptive of what they were) and there was nothing really special happening at the school. The high school had another football game on Friday, but it wasn't all that big of a game so they didn't have the middle school students come to the pep rally this time.

On Friday night, Joyce drove Eleven and a small bag of stuff over to Sarah's house for the sleepover. Eleven was still a little nervous about the whole thing, but Joyce insisted it was a great thing. They eventually pulled into Sarah's driveway after Joyce talked for the whole drive over about what to expect.

"Now, if you feel scared or decide you don't want to spend the night, that is no problem. I will be home all night and will always pick up if you call." Joyce said at the last moment to give her last bit of reassurance. Eleven appreciated that Joyce was willing to do so much for he, but at this point she was just anxious to go inside.

"I know, mom. Thanks for everything." Eleven said. Joyce immediately stopped talking and wrapped Eleven up in a big warm hug. Eleven saw no reason why she shouldn't call her 'mom'. She was the closest to a mother she had ever had and loved her for everything she did. Joyce felt a certain warmth whenever Eleven called her 'mom' and all she was able to do now was smile as Eleven picked up her bag and left the car.

Eleven pressed the button to ring the doorbell and was surprised how quickly Sarah got to the door.

"Hi! I am so glad you could come!" she said, giving Eleven a big hug. "Amy is already here in the basement, we're still waiting on Lucy." Sarah motioned to Eleven to come in and led her down to the basement.

"Elle!" she heard Amy's voice screech when she was about halfway down the stairs. Amy jumped up from the couch and pulled Eleven into her arms. All Eleven could think about was that Joyce didn't tell her how much hugging there would be at a sleepover. When Amy was finally done squeezing Eleven, she asked; "OK, so... what do you want to do?" Eleven thought back to the car ride over and all the things Joyce told her people do at sleepovers, but her answer was ultimately;

"Whatever you guys want to do."

"Let's just talk until Lucy gets here, then we can figure out what we all want to do." Sarah said. The doorbell rang as soon as she finished talking. "That's probably her now." Sarah quickly got up then ran up the stairs. Amy was quiet for a moment then started to talk to Eleven;

"So... where did you live before Hawkins?" she asked. Joyce and Jonathan had helped Eleven come up with a backstory to her life if she ever got questions like this.

"I lived in Indianapolis." she said, reciting her rehearsed reply.

"Oh cool." Amy said. Eleven was appreciating the attention from a new person, but not all that happy that all she could say about her previous life were lies and half-truths. "What was school like in the city?" Amy asked. She faced Eleven on the couch and began to smile a bit, which Eleven subconsciously mirrored.

"I was home schooled." Eleven replied. She was OK with this response because it wasn't entirely untrue.

"Well, whoever taught you certainly did a good job. You're kicking ass at school with us." Eleven smiled a little more than she already was. 'Kicking ass' was a phrase she knew well because of how often the boys (mainly Dustin) used it.

They heard the door at the top of the stairs open and Sarah descended with Lucy. There was a little more hugging then they all settled down on the couch to figure out what to do. There were a lot of suggestions, but they settled on watching a movie. After going through all the VHS tapes Sarah had, they eventually decided to watch Poltergeist. Sarah, Lucy and Amy were scared through the whole movie, but Eleven was never really found it too scary considering her real life experiences.

The film ended and they all tried to figure out what to do next. Sarah suggested that they all go up to her room and nobody protested, so they all went up the stairs. They got to the first floor and were about to continue up the stairs when the doorbell rang.

"Who could that be at 9 PM?" asked Amy.

"I honestly have no idea." Sarah replied. Eleven was a little scared imagining what it could be, so she got ready to use her powers to protect them despite the fact she wasn't supposed to use them around people who didn't know she had them. Sarah approached the door and slowly opened it revealing a very angry Troy holding a bicycle.

"Here." was all he said, dropping the bike on the porch. Sarah opened the door the rest of the way.

"So, what made you decide to be nice for once?" Sarah asked sarcastically.

"My parents made me give it back." Troy said, turning to leave.

"Well... you got the wrong house." Amy yelled after him. "The bike belongs to Lucy's brother. This is Sarah's house." Troy turned back, and stomped back towards the door more furious than before.

"You know, I tried. You could just say 'thanks Troy' and be done with it." He said angrily through his teeth. He turned around and marched off in a huff. Sarah was getting ready with something else to yell after him when Eleven collapsed.

"Are you OK?" Sarah asked, rushing over to Eleven.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Eleven lied. "This happens every once in a while. May I please use your phone." Sarah helped Eleven up and showed her where the phone was in the kitchen. The other girls decided to give Eleven some privacy and left the kitchen to let her make her call in peace. Eleven reached into her pocket and pulled out the piece of paper she always kept with her: Carter's phone number. She called it and the phone only rang once before it was picked up on the other end.

"Hello." came Agent Carter's familiar voice on the other end.

"It's El..." she wanted to say Eleven, but she thought that maybe the other girls could hear her and she didn't want them to question why she introduced herself as a number.

"You got another attack I'm guessing."

"Yes. How'd you know?"

"I have another set of equipment at home. Every one of the read-outs just spiked way up. Is there anything different this time?"

"No. Same as before."

"OK. If anything else bad happens, let me know as soon as you can." Eleven gave a small sound to indicate her understanding, then hung

up the phone. She left the kitchen to find the girls standing in the hallway, looking concerned for her.

"Is everything OK?" Sarah asked.

"Yes." Eleven lied again. "It will go away in a little bit. I just need to lie down." The others all helped her up the stairs and let her lay down on Sarah's bed. Sarah was then surprised by something.

"Elle, your nose is bleeding." she said, getting a tissue. Eleven took the tissue and pressed it up against the blood.

"That happens." she said, trying her best to make the others not worry too much about her. "You could ignore me for a minute and decide what to do next. I will be better soon." Sarah decided there wasn't much she could do, so she agreed to what Eleven had suggested. Eleven closed her eyes and tried not to focus on the pain. Almost as soon as her eyes were closed, she saw a familiar sight. It was the Wheeler family having dinner. She saw that Terri was there eating with them. She saw Holly moving a lot as she told another one of her stories, but the person she wanted to see most wasn't there. She searched the image for Mike, but he was nowhere to be seen. The view of the image moved and looked down at a plate, almost as if it were from a first-person perspective. When that happened, Eleven saw Mike's shirt and realized she was seeing everything from his point of view. She smiled a little bit and allowed herself to relax a bit more. She became sad when the image began to fade and everything turned to black. The sadness turned to fear when she heard the voice;

"Come back to us Eleven." was all she heard. It was enough to startle her out of her trance.

Her sudden movement scared the other girls in the room and Eleven immediately apologized for it. The headache was almost completely gone, so she got off the bed and sat next to Lucy on the floor.

"Feeling better?" Lucy asked.

"Yes." Eleven answered, happy that she didn't have to lie this time. "What did you decide to do?"

"We're going to play truth-or-dare." Amy said, happy that Eleven could join in. Eleven had no idea what 'truth-or-dare' was, but she loved games so she was excited.

"What is that? How do you win?" she asked excitedly. The other girls laughed and Sarah took it upon herself to explain the game.

"Nobody wins. You just... play. It's fun." she said.

"Oh." said Eleven, a little disappointed, but still excited to do something.

"I'll go first." announced Amy. She turned to Lucy and said; "Truth or dare?" Lucy thought for a moment before saying;

"Truth." Amy and Sarah giggled a little bit then Amy started to think. She eventually came up with something to ask;

"If I gave you a million dollars right now, what would you do with it?" she asked. Eleven was wrapped up in interest by this game even though Lucy and Sarah were a little disappointed by how tame the first question was.

"This is probably going to bore you, but I would put it all in the bank." Sarah and Amy smiled at how typical of Lucy that was. She was always the most responsible of the group.

"OK, Lucy. It's your turn." Amy said. Lucy turned to Sarah and very dramatically asked;

"Truth or dare?" Sarah didn't have to think very long before deciding to try something new.

"Dare." she said, very confident in her choice.

"Do an impression of Abraham Lincoln." Lucy excitedly told her. Sarah spent the next minute reciting as much as she could remember from the Gettysburg address as well as coming up with some ridiculousness of her own. Amy and Lucy were laughing as hard as they could and practically rolling around on the floor. Eleven found it funny, but she didn't find it as funny as the others. Eventually Sarah was done and sat back down. She turned to Eleven and asked;

"Truth or dare." Eleven still wasn't entirely sure what 'dare' meant, so she said;

"Truth."

"Is there anyone at school you... like?" Sarah asked soon after Eleven chose 'truth'. Eleven thought this was a strange question so she replied with the answer she thought was obvious;

"I like you guys." The other girls started laughing a little bit and Eleven was afraid she had done something wrong.

"No... like... is there a boy you really like?" Amy attempted to clarify. Eleven thought hard about this. Of course there was a boy she really liked: Mike. She remembered Nancy's advice to not say anything around it around the boys because Mike might get embarrassed, but she wasn't around the boys. Eleven was worried that even though this wasn't technically going against Nancy's advice, if it was going against the spirit of the advice. But the one thought that won out in the end was that Eleven had promised to tell the truth.

"Mike." was all she said.

"Mike Wheeler?" Amy asked. "One of the boys you always hang out with?"

"Yes." Eleven replied while beginning to smile.

"I'm pretty sure he likes you too." Sarah said.

"I know he likes me." Eleven said, no longer afraid to withhold any information. "We went on a date." The rest of the girls got really excited about this and they all pretty much abandoned the game of truth-or-dare in favor of grilling Eleven about Mike. This went on for a little while until everyone was exhausted and they all decided it was time for bed.

8. Chapter 8: Halloween

The next Monday was the first day in October. The weeks following it seemed pretty peaceful. Eleven only got a few attacks, but they were becoming increasingly rare and they went away faster. Carter collected data on all of them and insisted he was working on something to find the source, but he didn't have anything to show for it by the time Halloween came around. The holiday happened to fall on a Wednesday that year, so that meant that the school was going to be chaotic for the entire week.

Eleven was intrigued by the concept of Halloween and really wanted to go trick-or-treating. Mike was content to stay at home and eat candy while watching scary movies, but once he realized Eleven never got to experience Halloween before, he was excited to help. Joyce helped Eleven pick out a costume. She decided to simply dress up as a witch which Mike had told her was a 'classic' Halloween costume. Mike himself picked out a Han Solo costume that he was quite happy with.

On Monday, nothing particularly special happened in school until the group's normal meeting with Agent Carter after chemistry class.

"The Leadstone National Laboratory in Minnesota just went dark. Just like the ones in Hawkins and Westcliffe, Colorado." Carter said, walking over to a cabinet at the other end of the room. The cabinet stayed locked all the time, but he opened it once a day to check on it. Inside was all the equipment Carter got to try to figure out the source of the attacks. He decided pretty early on that it was best to keep it out of sight of the other students so they wouldn't ask questions he didn't know how to answer. He fiddled with some knobs while the kids absorbed the news he just told. Once he decided there was nothing else he could do with the machines, he locked the cabinet again and took his normal seat on the stool behind the table.

"There's one thing I don't understand." said Lucas, breaking the silence that had become normal whenever they got news from Carter. "When you explained The Coalition to us last year, you said that you guys had all the information from everyone. How is it that a bunch of places are able to hide things from you like this?" Carter prepared

himself to answer a question he had obviously been dreading.

"Ever since The Coalition was founded, there have been attempts to hide things from us." he began to explain. "In our first year, MI6 tried to hide a program that spied on a lot of their allies, and the CIA did the same thing about five years later. Neither of those agencies were all that careful about covering their tracks, so we got enough evidence to make some accusations. Every Coalition member-organization learned from those incidents and have been better more careful since then. We caught a couple of programs that went under our radar, but I am sure there are still a good number of thing we don't know. The Department of Energy is certainly doing something secret at a lot of their labs now, but they're covering up their tracks so well and finding so many loopholes that The Coalition can't come after then for it." There was another long pause before Mike brought up another topic he had been wondering about;

"El hasn't been getting many attacks for a while now. Isn't that a good thing?" he asked hopefully.

"I really want it to be a good thing." Carter said. "But I can't help but think that whoever is responsible for the attacks is just changing tactics." Nobody had anything else to say after that, so after a while of thinking, they left for lunch.

After lunch, Eleven got to history class and was happy to see that Sarah, Amy and Lucy were already there. They had all become better friends over the last month. Eleven had been to all of their houses and had slept over at Amy's about two weeks after the sleepover at Sarah's. They always helped cheer her up when Dr. Carter had bad news. They talked about their Halloween plans. Sarah, Amy and Lucy were going to spend the night at Lucy's house handing candy out to kids, but they wished her a fun time trick-or-treating and giggled when they heard she was going with Mike.

Wednesday finally came and Eleven was so excited she couldn't concentrate as well in her classes as she normally did. She still concentrated better than some of the kids in her class, but not nearly as well as her teachers had come to expect. When the final bell rang she sprang out of her seat and pranced over to the entrance to get her

bike. She rode home alone and found Joyce already waiting for her when she got there. The two of them spent the afternoon talking about what Halloween was like and what Eleven should know before going out.

Mike came at around 6:30 already dressed in his Han Solo costume and Eleven came out with the black dress and pointy hat of her witch costume. They said goodbye to Joyce and headed into the neighborhood to start the evening. As the time went by, Eleven was surprised by the sheer amount of candy she collect in such a short time period. She hadn't gotten any candy when she lived in the bad place, but she had come to like it living with the Byers. Joyce had given her a medium-sized pillow case and Eleven was sure it was way too big, but Joyce insisted that she take it anyway instead of something smaller.

After about two hours, they were struggling to carry their pillowcases. Mostly because they were tired, but also because they had collected a huge amount of candy. Mike had gone trick-or-treating for years, and the residents of Hawkins never ceased to amaze him with how generous they all became on Halloween. They went into a small forest near Mike's house to find somewhere peaceful away from all the trick-or-treaters to eat their candy and talk. They found a big tree stump right in the middle of the forest and sat down. They couldn't wait any longer to start eating the candy, so they did that before anything else. About three minutes later, Mike was the first one to talk;

"Did you have fun?" he asked. He already knew the answer, but he just wanted to hear Eleven talk.

"Yes. I did." she answered. "But the best part was that you were there." She moved a little closer to Mike after she was done talking. She looked into his eyes and Mike moved closer to her too. The moon was bright that night and it had no problem reaching them through the bare branches of the trees around them, so Mike could plainly see the expression on Eleven's face. They both closed their eyes and leaned in for a kiss. Their lips touched and they both felt great in each others' arms until they heard a voice. It wasn't that far away and it was directed straight at them;

"Ewww." was all it said. Mike broke the kiss immediately when he identified the distinctive voice. He looked up and saw Dustin looking straight at them. Lucas and Will came not a moment later.

"What? Did you see another slug?" asked Lucas. Dustin pointed at Mike and Eleven and said;

"No, I saw these two sucking face." He and Lucas started laughing a little while Will just stood frozen. Will had accepted Eleven into his family and loved her as a sister he had known his whole life, so it came as a bit of a shock to him to see one of his best friends with his face pressed up against his sister's. Mike's face turned red and he couldn't think of something to say. "Well, it's about damn time." Dustin said, him and Lucas walking towards the two.

"I have to say, Wheeler. This comes as no surprise to any of us." Lucas said before an important realization. "Well, maybe it's a bit of a surprise to Will. I know we had a rocky start as friends, El, but I am super happy that you two are together. At least, I assume this means you are together." Eleven was about to ask what 'together' meant in this situation when Mike found his words again;

"Wait a minute." he started out, somewhat rushed. "You're not going to make fun of me for this?"

"No." Dustin assured him. "Well, yes." he quickly corrected. "But not now." The celebration continued for a couple minutes longer. Will eventually walked over, but didn't say anything. The group would probably have stayed there for a little while longer if it weren't for what happened next. They heard a loud crack and then looked up to see a big rock lodged in a tree right next to them. They all examined it except Will, who was looking the other direction.

"Guys." Will called out to the group in a frightened voice.

"What is it, Will?" asked Lucas. When no response came, the group turned around to see Will stunned by fear pointing off into the distance. They looked where he was pointing and saw someone in the distance. They were wearing a black face mask and black clothes so none of their skin was showing. Mike was about to call to the figure to ask who they were when another big rock rose up from the ground

next to the person.

"El, what are you doing?" Mike asked, referring to the floating rock.

"I'm not doing that." Eleven replied, fear in her voice as well. "They are."

"We should leave." Mike told the group. "My house is the closest. We'll be safe there." he said, not entirely believing himself. The rock in the air next to the mystery-person then flew towards the group with great speed. If Mike hadn't ducked, it would have taken his head off. "RUN!" he yelled. The others all took off at top speed towards Mike's house. The person in black ran after them and rocks kept flying towards them, but none of them hit anyone. "Fan out!" Mike yelled, hoping that if they were farther apart, they would be harder to hit. The rocks kept coming and one of them hit Dustin in the arm. They were almost out of the forest when the rocks stopped coming. Mike turned around to see if their attacker had given up, but he instead saw an entire tree heading straight for him. He wasted too much time looking behind him and there was nowhere he could go to avoid it. At the last moment, Eleven jumped in and the tree immediately stopped and flew in the opposite direction. In the distance, Mike could see the person in black fall over. He assumed it was due to something Eleven did. Eleven was spent as well and struggled to stay on her feet. Mike scooped her up and carried her the rest of the way to his house to find the others already there.

They rushed in the basement door and Dustin quickly shut and locked it behind him, keeping guard to see if the mysterious figure tried to pursue them further. Mike set Eleven down on the couch and stroked her hair as she slowly regained her strength. He told the others the story of how she saved his life. Eleven eventually was feeling well enough to sit up at which point she pulled a piece of paper out of her shoe. Mike recognized the paper pretty quickly, but he still had some questions.

"Why was Carter's phone number in your shoe?" he asked.

"No pockets. Safest place." was all Eleven was able to say. Mike smiled at her and Eleven smiled back. He gave her a quick kiss on the forehead before running upstairs to use the phone.

"Mike, is that you?" Karen called from the living room.

"Yes, Mom." Mike called back. "We just got home."

"We?" Karen called back. "Who's we?" Mike realized he messed up. He could have said that he was the only one there, but not anymore.

"El, Dustin, Lucas and Will are here." Mike confessed. "I just have to use the phone for a moment."

"OK. Just be quick." Karen added. "The others have to be home by ten. It's a school night."

"Got it, mom." Mike called one last time before taking the phone off the hook and dialing the number. It didn't ring for long before Carter picked up.

"Hello." he said.

"Carter, it's Mike." Mike said. He wanted to continue a little longer but Carter cut him off.

"Hey, was Eleven using her powers about ten minutes ago? I got some readings that make it look like she did, but they're way bigger than anything I've seen from her before."

"That's a long story and I don't have time to go into the details now. Basically, there was someone else tonight with similar powers, they attacked us but we got away." Mike was speaking quietly at this point so his mother wouldn't hear anything he said. "Again, I can't explain it all right now. We're all safe, but we're scared. We'll tell you the whole story after class tomorrow." Agent Carter wanted to hear the whole story immediately, but he understood the restrictions the kids had because they were kids and had parents looking over their shoulders at all times.

"OK. I'm quite curious, but I think I can wait." Carter said before hanging up. Mike went back downstairs and told the others about the call with Carter and that his mom said they all needed to be home by ten.

"I'm not going outside now!" Lucas announced. "Not with whatever

attacked us still out there."

"Then you should go home now." said Will, speaking up for the first time all night. "There are still a bunch of trick-or-treaters out there and I don't think whoever that was would come after you in public like that." Lucas tried to find fault in Will's logic, but he didn't and he couldn't think up a better idea.

"Well then, I guess it's time for me to go." Lucas said after he came to his conclusions.

"I should go too." said Dustin. "I also don't want to get attacked again so I guess it's best if I go now." He turned to Will and Eleven on the couch. "You two OK?"

"We'll be fine." Will said. "I'll call my mom and she'll come pick us up." Everyone was satisfied that everyone had a way to get home safely, so Lucas and Dustin left and Will went upstairs to call Joyce. About ten minutes later, Joyce arrived and knocked on the door. Eleven had regained almost all of her strength so she was able to go upstairs to the car and act like nothing had happened.

With Will and Eleven gone, Mike got ready for bed and climbed under the sheets, but he was too scared to actually sleep. After a long time, nothing happened and his exhaustion got the best of him and he fell asleep. That night, both him and Eleven heard the voice in their dreams for the first time in a long time. The only thing was that it said something different that night;

"If you won't come back to us, we will take you."

The next day at school, Mike and Eleven confirmed that they heard the same thing in their dream and tried to figure out explanations for why they were the only ones that could ever hear it. They came up with a lot of hypotheses, but they had no way to test any of them, so they decided to just leave it be right before the bell rang. The first three classes of the day were unbearably long. All any of them wanted was for chemistry to be over so they could tell Carter all about what happened the previous night. Carter was more fun than normal during the class in a vain attempt to get the group in the corner engaged in his lesson about reaction rates. Everyone else in

the class appreciated it.

Finally, the bell rang and the group patiently waited until everyone had left the room and Carter had locked the door. As soon as the agent sat down on his stool, their patience disappeared completely and they all started telling their version of the story at once.

"Everyone! Please calm down for a moment." Carter pleaded with the kids. They realized that it was probably best to allow him to pilot the conversation a little so there was some order to it. "First things first. I just got a report from the Coalition Data Center in Kansas that some of the reports I've been sending them and some associated documents have gone missing. This was done much more secretly than the break-in that was staged about a month ago and it's especially scary because it means that whoever we're fighting against in this probably has people inside The Coalition." He looked around the room to see a lot of concerned faces staring back at him. "My bosses are running an internal investigation to find out the extent of the problem. I am going to urge you all to be as vigilant as possible until we find out what is happening." He took another pause to allow the unsatisfactory news to sink in before continuing. "Now... what happened last night." They all took turns going around the room. Each person told their version of the events that happened the previous night, each with little differences. The most colorful version of the story was Dustin's. He took a lot of time to describe the state in which he, Lucas and Will found Mike and Eleven. Mike buried his face in his hands when Dustin started telling this part of the story in excruciating detail while Eleven scooted close to him and put her hand on his arm to comfort him. The rest of the stories pretty much said the same thing, but each of them had different little details. They didn't notice how much time had passed until the bell rang, signaling the end of lunch. All of them realized they hadn't eaten anything, but they didn't really care.

Sarah, Amy and Lucy were already in history class by the time Eleven got there after scrambling to get out of the chemistry room once the bell rang. They traded stories from Halloween while waiting for the class to start. Sarah, Amy and Lucy had spent the entire night watching scary movies. Amy listed off all the titles, but Eleven didn't know any of them so she just nodded along. They asked Eleven how

her night went and she told them the whole story up until the point where they got attacked telepathically by a mysterious figure.

About a week later, everyone had Friday off of school. Mike explained to Eleven that this was to allow the teachers to finalize all their grades so report cards could be sent home to their parents. He had to explain report cards too, but he didn't mind. Will and Eleven spent their day off relaxing at home. Joyce and Jonathan had to work that day, so they had the house to themselves. They watched a lot of TV and messed around with Will's Super-Comm. Will had never been able to contact anyone on it from his house, but Eleven was able to help with that so they spent about an hour talking to Mike, Lucas and Dustin over the radios. Joyce came home a little earlier than normal, but neither Will nor Eleven seemed to notice. Mike eventually settled at the kitchen table to work on homework while Eleven took the big chair in the living room to read a book. The first thing that indicated something was different was at about 6:00 when Joyce announced;

"OK, I'm leaving." Eleven looked up from her book and Will looked up from his homework. Neither of them had any idea what she was talking about.

"Where are you going?" Will eventually asked.

"Parent-teacher conferences of course" Joyce said as if he should have known it already. "Whenever you guys have one of these days off, I go to conferences. We've been doing this for years." Will looked at Eleven with a terrified expression on his face. Eleven didn't know what 'parent-teacher conferences' were, so she wasn't affected by it. Joyce left the house and Will stood up from his chair and started to panic.

"What's wrong?" asked Eleven.

"She's going to parent-teacher conferences." Will said.

"I know. She said that. What does that mean?"

"She's going to the school and our teachers are going to tell her what we've been like all year." Eleven tried to figure out why Will was so

upset about it. It took her a while, but then she figured it out too.

"That means..." she started. She wasn't able to finish before being interrupted by Will.

"Yes. She's going to figure out that Carter's been here all year."

Joyce had been going to parent-teacher conferences for as long as she could remember. The routine was the same everywhere; she would get to a classroom, sit in line in the chairs they set up outside the room, then when the person in front of her would leave, she would go in. Will had been doing pretty well in school this year and the teachers confirmed that. Joyce wasn't too surprised, he had always been a good student. She was really excited however to find out what the teachers had to say about Eleven. The couple that she had been to so far had said that she was the most attentive person in class and one of their brightest students. Joyce was proud of Eleven for all the work she had done to get to this point, and she was a little proud of herself for helping her get there. She eventually reached the chemistry room and sat down in one of the chairs. She smiled as Karen Wheeler, Mike's mom, sat down next to her about a minute later.

"Hi, Joyce. How have you been?" she asked.

"I've been pretty good." Joyce replied. "Raising three kids isn't too hard when they're all as great as they are."

"They really are great." Karen said, thinking back to all the times that Eleven and Will had helped her out over the past couple of months, mainly with dinner whenever they stayed over. "I'm kind of excited to meet this teacher, I heard he's really interesting." Joyce was confused.

"I've never heard such a glowing review of Kaminsky before."

"What? You didn't hear?"

"Didn't hear what?"

"Kaminsky quit after the second week of school." Joyce reeled back a little bit in surprise after hearing this. "I heard he won the lottery and

they got a long-term sub in to teach the class. Mike doesn't talk about him all that much, but I heard through the grapevine that he's quite the character." Joyce didn't reply. She was confused as to the reason that neither of her kids that had class with such an interesting teacher would ever mention him. She tried to imagine a reason for them having said nothing about him, but she didn't have to imagine much longer as the parent that got there right before her came out of the classroom. Joyce stood up and prepared herself for whatever was inside. She walked in and immediately recognized who was sitting on the other side of the desk.

"Joyce! How good it is to see you again." Agent Carter said to a wide-eyed and speechless Joyce Byers. She silently took her seat and tried to decide what to say.

"Why are you back in Hawkins?" was the obvious question, and the first one she asked. Carter got a puzzled expression as he tried to figure out why she asked this question in the first place.

"What do you mean? You didn't know I was back?"

"No. I didn't even know that Kaminsky was gone until about two minutes ago. There has to be some reason you're here. Should I be worried?" Agent Carter thought a moment about why the kids would keep his presence a secret from Joyce. He could come up with a bunch of reasons, and decided it probably wasn't a good idea to drop the whole truth on her.

"We got some mysterious readings from this area and my bosses decided I should be sent undercover to protect Eleven." he said truthfully before beginning to lie. "But there is probably nothing to worry about. All you need to know is that both of your students are doing great in my class and that they are entirely safe under my protection." This accomplished what Carter hoped it would and reassured Joyce a little bit so that she didn't pull her kids out of school and move across the country to protect them herself (it was an idea that had crossed her mind). Joyce stood up and walked towards the door. She didn't say anything else to Carter on the way out or to Karen when she got outside. She simply walked out of the school and drove home.

9. Chapter 9: The Boy

November came and went. Joyce told Will and Eleven about her meeting with Carter and they confirmed everything he said, lying by omission a little bit. They both felt bad about not telling her about Carter's return earlier and promised to be more open with her. The entire Byers family got invited over to the Wheeler's house for Thanksgiving at the end of the month. Eleven was astounded by the amount of food that had been prepared for that one meal. She was not surprised that when they were done they were given a big container with food that they got to take home.

December rolled around and Eleven got to start making plans for the thing she was most excited for: the Snow-Ball. Nancy offered to take her shopping, but Sarah, Amy and Lucy had already asked her to go with them because they were going to the dance too. Eleven told Nancy this expecting her to be upset, but she wasn't, but they did agree to go shopping another time after the dance.

The week before the dance, Carter was teaching chemistry like normal. Everyone was laughing at the little metaphors he came up with to explain the concepts they were discussing when the phone rang.

"Sorry, guys. I've got to answer this." He said, the smile from his lesson still on his face. "Hello." he said after picking up the phone. The class respected him and went completely silent so he could hear whoever was on the other end of the line. The smile came off his face and was replaced by a much more serious expression after only about a minute on the phone. He continued to listen for about another three minutes. "OK. I'm on my way." he finally said before hanging up. He looked at his watch and saw it was only about five minutes before the class was set to end. "Class is over for the day. Everyone go to lunch early, I have a..." he thought of a good excuse for a moment. "Family emergency." he decided on before almost running out of the room. He came back in for a moment, grabbed his coat that he had forgotten, then ran out a second time. Everyone was confused except for the group in the corner. They were scared.

Everyone went to lunch like Carter had said. The group spent the

whole lunch period trying to figure out what had made Carter so frantic, but came up empty. Eleven was the first one to get to history class and when Sarah, Amy and Lucy got there, they started making plans for the big shopping trip they were going on that weekend. The bell rang and the teacher started teaching until his phone rang. He was only on it for about 30 seconds before hanging up and saying;

"Elle Byers; Dr. Carter just called you down to his room to work on your chemistry project." Eleven stood up, collected her things and silently exited the room. She didn't know what was going, but avoided jumping to conclusions until she got to the chemistry room.

Carter was standing there and Mike walked in the room soon after her.

"I thought about this for a bit, and I think it would be best if you two came with me on this call." he said more seriously than they had ever heard him before. They went out to his car, careful not to be seen by anyone else for fear of questions being asked as to why a teacher was taking two students away from school in the middle of the day.

Mike and Eleven chose to both sit in the back of the car, leaving the front seat open. Carter started up the BMW and drove out of the parking spot before accelerating aggressively through the parking lot. This theme of speed continued throughout the whole drive. Mike was the first one to speak up and ask the obvious question;

"So... where are we going?"

"Coalition base in Indianapolis. It's only about 45 minutes from the school. I'll make sure to have you guys back by 3." They had the earliest lunch period of the day, so it was still pretty early.

"Why are we going there exactly?" Mike asked.

"It's hard to explain. It's probably best for you to just see." Carter answered. Nobody said anything for the rest of the drive. About 45 minutes later (a little less because of how fast Carter drove), they arrived in the city and pulled into an underground garage. They all got out of the car and Carter locked it. Just inside a door on the side of the big garage was an elevator meant to get people up to the

surface. They got inside but Carter didn't press any of the buttons. Instead, he pulled out a key and stuck it into the slot meant to deactivate the elevator in case of a fire. He turned it past the position it was supposed to go to and instead of the elevator deactivating, it started going down.

Once the elevator went down for a while, the doors opened onto a scene that Mike found fascinating. There were desks all over, most of them with computers. Everything seemed like some form of organized chaos as everyone scrambled to keep the world from falling apart. Eleven looked uncomfortable, which Carter noticed.

"Don't worry," he told her. "You are safe here. I will personally make sure that nobody does anything to you and Mike is here to make sure I keep that promise." He smiled at her and she smiled back, feeling a little better than before. A tall man with black hair came up to them and greeted Agent Carter with a handshake.

"Thanks for coming on such short notice, Peter. I hope your cover didn't suffer because of it," the man said.

"I hope so too. The only way to know will be to go back tomorrow," Carter said.

"These must be the kids you told me about," the man said, extending his hand which both Mike and Eleven shook. "My name is Agent Freely. I've heard a lot about you two from Peter's reports." Both of the kids were too shy to say anything, but they did find it a little funny that Freely was calling Carter by his first name. "Right this way," Freely said, leading them down a hall at the edge of the room. They walked down a labyrinth of halls until they finally got to a big security door. Freely keyed a code into a number pad on the wall. There was a loud buzzing noise and the door opened. Freely walked further and the others followed until they came upon a window into an interrogation room. What they saw was a big surprise for Mike and Eleven. Sitting at the table was a young boy, he couldn't have been more than 8 or 9 years old. Strangely enough, Eleven was the first one to start asking questions;

"Who is he?"

"We don't know exactly. He was found in a train yard on the edge of town last night. He was making a bunch of little pebbles around him float and that's how he ended up with us instead of the police." Freely explained.

"But what is his name?" Eleven asked.

"Look at his arm." Mike said to Eleven. She had to look closely but she could clearly see a tattoo on his arm that said '012'.

"Twelve." was all she said. She stared at the boy in the room who began to stare back at her.

"That's strange." Freely said. "It's one way glass, it looks like a mirror on the other side but it looks like he's looking right at you." Eleven didn't take the time to explain that he was looking right at her, that he could more or less see her presence. Instead, she asked;

"Can I talk to him?"

"Well, first we would have to do a lot of paperwork." Freely started to explain. "Then you would need to undergo a background check, then..."

"Jeff, just let her go in and talk to him." Carter interrupted. Freely sighed before saying;

"Fine." He led Eleven around a corner to another big security door. Another pin code later and the door buzzed and opened. Mike could see through the security glass that the boy was on edge and was startled when the door buzzed. He looked terrified when a very calm Eleven walked into the room. The big door was closed and locked behind her and she slowly walked over to the table and sat down in the chair opposite to the boy. She didn't say anything at first. All she did was set her arm on the table and roll up her sleeve to reveal her tattoo; '011'. The boy took a moment to read it but then he reeled back in surprise. He looked like he wanted to say something but couldn't get it out so Eleven was the first to speak;

"You don't need to be scared. These are good people. They just don't know who you are." She could see on the boy's face that he was

trying to understand what she had just said. He eventually did and began asking his own questions.

"You... one of them?" he asked. He reminded Mike of how Eleven was when they first found her.

"No." Eleven said, a small reassuring smile coming onto her face. "I'm free." The boy looked like he didn't understand the word 'free'. Eleven closed her eyes and the boy soon did the same. Mike looked around and saw that Carter and Freely were confused as to what she was doing.

"She's using her powers to communicate." he explained. "She can show him more than words like this." He was making a lot of assumptions. He assumed that she was using her powers and he assumed that the boy also had similar powers. He assumed that that meant they could communicate more effectively like that. After about two minutes, Eleven opened her eyes and smiled at the boy, he opened his and smiled back. Eleven stood up and walked over to the security glass. She looked Freely right in the eye despite the one way mirror.

"He's hungry and scared." she started. "Give him some food and assure him that he will be safe." She was giving a command, not making a request. "He's scared right now and I won't be of much help. Do what I said and I can help him more tomorrow." She turned to the boy, said goodbye and once more told him that he was safe, then went to the door and was buzzed out. It was almost 2:00 by this point and Carter knew he had to get the kids back home. They said goodbye to Freely and agreed to be in contact to help the boy.

During the car ride home, Eleven and Carter made plans for her to come back the next day. She thought it would be best to just be honest with Joyce and tell her everything that happened. Carter agreed, but he insisted that for security reasons, Joyce couldn't know any specifics about the base. Mike didn't think it was too important for him to come with another time, so he said he would just stay at school. Carter and Eleven decided it would be best to go after school. That way, nobody would become suspicious as to their whereabouts.

They pulled into the Hawkins Middle School parking lot about 45

seconds before the final bell rang. Mike and Eleven said goodbye to Carter and ran over to get their bikes before the big rush of kids came out of the school. The bell rang but Mike and Eleven were underway before too many kids made it out to make it difficult. Mike was going to go home with Eleven to help explain the situation to Joyce. Once they were about half a mile from the school, he asked the question that had been burning in his mind;

"What did you do exactly when you and the boy closed your eyes and sat silently?" He had his guesses, but he really wanted to know for sure.

"What do you think I did?" Eleven asked, smiling a little.

"I think you showed him all your memories of Hawkins, school, all the people..."

"I could have done that, but I thought it would be more powerful if I just showed him the most important person in my life. The person that helped me through the bad times and made the good times as good as they are."

"Who's that?" Eleven didn't say anything more. She just smiled at Mike and marveled at how dumb he was being. "Oh." Mike finally said when he realized what she meant. He forgot about all the uncertainties surrounding them for a moment and simply smiled at how much this girl cared about him.

They made it to the Byers' house and were warmly greeted by Joyce. She made both of them hot chocolate and they attempted to explain their day. Joyce was patient and let the kids finish talking before she threw in her opinion. She agreed to let Eleven go with, but she made Eleven promise to call her once they got to the base. She didn't know about the attacks and the mysterious figure in the forest, but Joyce could tell that something was going on.

The next day in school, Eleven and Mike were impatient for the first three periods. Lucas, Dustin and Will knew that something had happened, but had no idea what and they were forced to wait until their meeting after chemistry class to find out. The bell rang,

everyone left, Carter locked the door and Mike began the story. He told about their trip in great detail and nobody dared to interrupt him. Lucas was the first one to talk when Mike was finally done;

"Do you think we can trust him?"

"Who?" asked Mike.

"The kid." Lucas said, ever the skeptic.

"Why wouldn't we be able to trust him?"

"I don't know... I'm just a little... scared."

"Lucas, he's like 8 years old." Mike said, still not understanding why Lucas was acting as he was.

"So? He has super powers! El is only like 12 and she could still beat up pretty much anyone." Eleven chose to take that as a compliment and smiled a little when he said it. Nobody knew Eleven's exact birthday so they just decided that it should be on January 3rd: the day she got back from the Upside Down. They listed her as 12 years old so she would be in the same class as the boys.

"I know that everything is uncertain right now, but I am sure that he just needs to learn about everything like I did." Eleven said, insisting that he wasn't anything bad or anything to be afraid of. They discussed for a little longer, but the bell rang and it was time to go to their next classes.

When Eleven got to history class, she was caught off guard by Amy's first question;

"How did your chemistry project go?" she asked.

"What?" asked Eleven, not entirely sure what Amy was talking about.

"You got called out of class by Dr. Carter yesterday to work on a chemistry project." Amy explained, somewhat sarcastically. "How did it go?"

"Oh... good." was all Eleven could say. She wasn't too good at coming

up with lies on the spot. Thankfully, the bell rang and they all quieted down as the lesson started. The class wasn't anything remarkable, but when it was one, nobody asked any more questions about Eleven's 'chemistry project'. Instead, they chose to talk about their weekend plans. Sarah's mom had agreed to bring everyone to the mall and they were going to spend a couple of hours there buying dresses and makeup. Eleven had a small understanding of what makeup was, she used it to cover her tattoo when she wore short sleeves, but she didn't know why she would need it for the dance. Sarah just said to trust her on it.

After school, Eleven met Carter in the chemistry room and they drove into the city so she could talk to the boy again. Eleven sat in the front seat this time because Mike wasn't there. She was able to get a better view of the route and memorized where the base was just in case she needed to go there in an emergency. They rode down on the Elevator and were again greeted by Agent Freely. He led them in a different direction than the previous day.

"He's not in the interrogation room like yesterday, he's in a normal cell. We thought it would be more comfortable for him." Freely said as they walked through the confusing maze of hallways once again. Eleven was happy that they were trying to make the boy feel comfortable, but a little sad that he still had to stay in a cell.

They reached a cell, Eleven was buzzed in and she greeted the boy again. He smiled at her and seemed less scared than he had been the previous day. She knew that his language skills were not very good, so they spent most of the session communicating with their powers like they had briefly done the last time. She thanked him when he had told her everything he could, and she left. Carter and Freely were waiting on the other side of the door. They all went to a conference room in another section of the facility and Eleven began to tell them what she learned.

"About a month ago, you told us that a lab in Minnesota had 'gone dark', right?" she asked Carter.

"Yeah... the Leadstone National Laboratory."

"That's where he's from." Eleven announced. "He had heard stories in

the lab about someone in Indiana who broke out and was free. He had heard about me... He was able to get here mainly by hiding on trains."

"That's a pretty smart kid." Freely said. Carter shot an annoyed look at him for interrupting Eleven. "Sorry... continue."

"He wants the same thing I have: a chance to live a normal life. Do you think there is any chance he could get that?" Eleven asked, pleading with Freely.

"I can see a lot of obstacles to that..." Freely started to say before seeing the increasingly sad expression on Eleven's face. "But I am sure that it could be arranged." Eleven wasn't sad anymore. She felt better than she had felt in a long time that she was able to help someone like her.

10. Chapter 10: The Snow-Ball

A/N: This chapter is a little shorter than some of the ones I have been posting recently, but I thought everything here deserved its own chapter.

The weekend was nice for Eleven. She went out to the mall with Sarah, Amy and Lucy. She picked out a dress that the others raved about and she got some makeup that the others selected for her. When she got home, she showed off the dress to Joyce who said she looked wonderful in it. The school week was hard for Eleven because of how excited she was. She noticed that Mike was acting a little different too. He was a little anxious about the dance, but he was excited nonetheless.

Finally, Friday came around and Eleven couldn't tell what most of her teachers were saying she was so excited. Carter had nothing new to report, so they just went straight to lunch. Eleven sat down with their normal group at a table in the corner and they were all surprised when some more people sat with them.

"Hey, Elle!" said Amy as she, Sarah and Lucy sat down next to them. Eleven was happy to see them but the boys were simply confused. Dustin was the first one to voice this concern;

"What are you three doing here?" he asked. It didn't quite come out like he wanted.

"We're sitting with Elle." said Sarah.

"Yes, but that also means you're sitting with us." said Lucas. "Don't you realize how much of social suicide it is to be seen associating with us?"

"Let me tell you something, buddy; we don't care." Amy said. "We are very happy with the friends we have and you guys all seem nice enough." The boys were speechless for a while. The girls didn't seem to care and just started talking with Eleven about their plans for that night.

"So... are you guys going to the dance?" asked Lucy. She was shy around new people and didn't talk as much as the others, so it was nice to hear her engaging with the boys.

"No." said Dustin. "We're going to sit at home. Probably go to bed early."

"I'm going." said Mike, somewhat timidly. The girls giggled quietly when he said this; it was obvious that they already knew. Lunch continued on like this for the rest of the period and when the bell finally rang, Eleven went with the girls to history class.

When the day was over, Eleven met the other girls at the bike racks. They were all going directly to Sarah's house to get ready for the dance but Lucy and Sarah didn't have bikes, so they all just walked. When they got there, Eleven found that Joyce had already dropped off her dress and the makeup the girls had bought. Eleven put on her dress at the same time as the other girls. Sarah, Amy and Lucy did their own makeup because they already knew how to. When they were done, Amy and Lucy went downstairs while Sarah had Eleven sit in a chair so she could do her makeup. The process reminded Eleven of the time that Mike's unpracticed hand put makeup on her so they could sneak into the school and use the AV club equipment to find Will, but Sarah was a little better at it. She had practice and knew what she was doing. After a little bit, she announced to Eleven that she was done. Eleven looked into the mirror to her side and all she could say was;

"Pretty." Eleven slowly descended the stairs to the main floor to find Amy and Lucy waiting for her.

"Oh my god! You look like a princess!" exclaimed Amy. Lucy nodded her head in agreement. Eleven couldn't say anything, she was too flattered for words.

Sarah's mom got home from work and drove all the girls to the school. Mike was waiting at the entrance when they got there. Eleven ran out of the car as soon as it stopped and gave Mike a big hug. Mike was wearing a suit that didn't fit him. Some of the parts of it were too small, others were much too big. Eleven didn't really notice

how much the suit didn't fit, she just noticed the way Mike was looking at her.

The dance was in the gym. The big floodlights on the ceiling were turned off and some big strings of white Christmas lights were strung all over the room. The moon was bright that night and its light streamed in through the small windows near the ceiling providing an eerie but nice lighting. On one end of the room was a man with a big table. Mike explained to Eleven that he was the 'DJ'. He was the one playing all the music and if they wanted him to play a specific song, they could go up and ask him. Eleven looked around and saw that there were about twice as many girls as boys. Sarah, Amy and Lucy stuck together but disappeared into the crowd to start dancing immediately. Eleven was a little more timid and Mike was more than happy to wait with her until she was ready to go dance.

After about fifteen minutes, Eleven decided she was ready. She took one more look around the room and held her gaze on one of the far corners. Mike noticed this and turned to see what she was seeing. He noticed what she was looking at and they both walked over to it.

"What are you doing here?" Mike asked Carter who was standing off in the corner.

"What does it look like I'm doing? I'm chaperoning the dance."

"Why?" asked Eleven.

"Because I'm a teacher and that's what teachers do."

"But it's not something *you* do." Mike said, trying to force some information out of Carter that he wasn't sure was actually there.

"It's a big public gathering and I thought it would be safer if I was her. That's it. Honestly. Now... go back and dance. Have fun." Mike and Eleven reluctantly turned back but neither of them felt ready to dance anymore. Instead, they went over to the big table on the other side of the gym and Mike poured them both some punch. After about three cups of punch and a bag of pretzels each, they no longer thought anything was wrong. A slow song came on and Eleven remembered what Joyce told her to do during a slow song. She

grabbed Mike's hand and pulled him to his feet. They made their way to the edge of the crowd. Mike put his hand on Eleven's waist, trying to be confident. As the song continued, they fell into each others' arms and just enjoyed dancing with each other.

The song was about to end when the lights flickered and the music cut out for a moment then returned. Nobody really noticed except for Mike and Eleven. Mike lifted his head off of Eleven's shoulder to see a concerned look on her face.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"It's here."

"What's here?"

"The thing that attacked us in the forest on Halloween." Mike's face also turned serious and he tried to push back his fear in order to do something about it.

"What should we do?" he asked. Eleven thought for a moment, trying to come up with a plan.

"It's only after me." she said.

"So?"

"So I should go somewhere else so everyone else here isn't in danger."

"I'm coming with you."

"No. It's too dangerous."

"Save your energy for fighting whatever is after you There's no way I'm letting you face it alone." A little bit of fear left Eleven and she felt a warm feeling when she realized exactly how much Mike would do for her.

They were able to sneak out a door to the side of the room and they didn't think anybody saw them. They wandered deeper into the school and eventually got to the school library.

"Here?" Mike asked Eleven. "It's certainly far enough from the dance."

"This should be good." Eleven said, not entirely sure. The two of them began mentally preparing themselves when they heard it;

"Elle! Why did you two leave?" It was Amy. She was running towards Mike and Eleven with Sarah and Lucy following close behind her.

"No no no." Eleven said, more terrified with them there than she would have been alone. "You three can't be here."

"Why not?" Sarah asked. "Do you want to spend some alone time with your boyfriend?" Amy and Lucy tried to hold back giggles but soon stopped when Eleven stayed as serious as she did.

"You have to go. Now." Eleven insisted.

"Too late." a frightened Mike said, pointing towards the big door at the entrance to the room. The figure was there again. Still completely dressed in black, but they could see a little more detail this time. The big black cloak it was wearing reminded Mike of Emperor Palpatine from Return of the Jedi. The main difference was that there was no wrinkly old face below the hood, just a completely black mask that obscured any face that was behind it.

"Who's that?" Amy loudly asked. "You trying to scare us?" she yelled at the figure. Mike and Eleven rushed over to try to get her to be quiet, but what the figure did next was enough to do that for them. The stapler from the librarian's desk lazily floated up from the table and stopped about a foot from the figure. Amy was stunned by surprise but she did manage to say; "OK... that is a little bit scary." The stapler took off at full speed towards them. Mike and Eleven pulled the rest of the girls behind one of the nearby bookshelves for cover. They were able to withstand a barrage of office supplies for a while by staying on the move and going further back through the rows of bookshelves. About a minute later, they panicked when they found themselves trapped in a corner. They saw the figure coming from one side so they desperately ran to the other. They were back out in the big open space in the middle of the library. They looked around to see where figure had gone to. It was on the opposite end of the space. There were two openings in the bookshelves that weren't

blocked by the attacker. The group ran towards the first one only to have some other shelves move of their own accord to block them. They ran towards the second escape route but the same thing happened. The whole group tried to push the shelf out of the way except for Eleven who stayed in the middle and started staring down their attacker.

"Elle! What are you doing?" Sarah yelled after she saw Eleven just standing there. She thought her friend must have had a death-wish or something. A three-hole punch rose up off the desk next to the figure, the group watched in horror as they expected Eleven to be decapitated by the flying office equipment. Instead, all the books on the shelves surrounding them flew off and buried the mysterious figure. Eleven stumbled for a moment. Mike ran towards her and caught her as she fainted and fell to the floor. Her nose was bleeding so he took out a tissue from his pocket and started to clean her up. He forgot about the other girls for a moment until Lucy, usually the quiet one, was the first to say something;

"What... the hell... was that?" Mike turned his head and got ready to explain when they heard a loud noise as the big door flew open. Agent Carter rushed in, expertly handling a gun that he obviously didn't feel comfortable holding. He examined the situation. He saw three terrified girls, Eleven unconscious in Mike's lap, and a big pile of books in the middle of the room.

"What happened?" he asked.

"It came back." Mike said promptly. "The same thing that came after us on Halloween."

"And you two didn't think to tell me?"

"It didn't cross our minds. We were busy trying to figure out how to make sure whatever that..." he pointed to the pile of books. "...is didn't wreck havoc in the gym."

"Fair enough." Carter said after his examination of the situation. He was about to look for the attacker in the mountain of books when he noticed the three terrified girls again. "Who are they?" he asked.

"We're Elle's friends." Amy managed to say. "We came looking for her after we saw them leave the gym." Amy's comments made Mike think of something;

"Why aren't you in the gym?" he asked Carter.

"I saw that you two weren't there and assumed the worst." he said, walking over to the pile of books. "Apparently I was right to assume that." Carter kept the gun at the ready in his right hand and started digging around in the books, looking for the attacker. About five minutes later, he had moved every single book and there was nobody to be found in them. "It must have gotten away in the confusion when I got here." Eleven stirred and attempted to sit up.

"Oh good!" exclaimed Mike. "You're awake." He gave her a big hug.

"What happened? After I threw all the books at it?" she asked.

"We don't exactly know." said Carter. Eleven was able to sit up completely and took a look around the room. She too had forgotten that Sarah, Amy and Lucy were there. Carter noticed this and attempted to help solve the situation.

"I have some memory drugs in the chemistry room." he suggested trying to help. "We can give them some and they'll forget this night ever happened." Sarah, Amy and Lucy seemed to become even more terrified at this suggestion, but Eleven helped them out by saying;

"No. It's time they knew the truth."

Mike picked up Eleven and carried her to the chemistry room with Carter leading the way. He unlocked the door, led everyone inside, then locked it again behind them. Carter wheeled out the big comfy chair that he had behind his desk and Mike sat Eleven down on it. The rest of them took a seat except for Carter who went to the back of the room to look at all the readings he got on his equipment.

"So... the truth?" demanded Amy. Mike started the story all the way back with the day Will went missing. He told them about when they met Eleven (and that her name was Eleven, confirmed by showing

them the tattoo on Eleven's arm). He went on to tell them about their findings and the final fight with the Demogorgon. If the girls hadn't been involved in a fight against a telepathic figure in a black cloak, they probably wouldn't have believed a word anything they said. Carter picked up the story from there and he told them about his first visit to Hawkins. He mainly focused on the part where he got Eleven back from the Upside Down. He didn't tell them too much about The Coalition, but Mike understood why and the story still made sense without that part. Finally, they got to the recent part of the story. They told about Carter's unexpected return and the attacks that Eleven had gotten as well as the first time they met the figure in black on Halloween.

When they were finally done, the three girls were silent. They had so many questions but none of them wanted to go first. After a long, dead silence, Sarah was the first one to talk;

"So... the headache you got at my house during the sleepover... that was someone trying to attack your mind?"

"Yes." Eleven answered. "At least that's what we think it was." Amy then stood up and began to walk towards the door. She grabbed the handle but it was locked and wouldn't open.

"Could you open the door?" she asked Carter.

"Why?" he asked in return.

"I can't deal with this right now."

"What?" asked Lucy. "Mike and Elle... or Eleven... or whatever she wants to be called... they've just been through all this too and we need to listen to them."

"But the thing I can't get over is that El lied to us. She didn't tell us something that could have protected us."

"But that's not what she did." said Lucy, being surprisingly vocal. "She didn't tell us her whole story for two reasons that I can think of. Either she is ashamed of her past life and wanted some friends that didn't know about it and just saw her as a normal person, or she was

trying to protect us." Eleven was glad that Lucy was willing to stand up for her. She was even more glad when she saw Sarah nodding along to everything Lucy was saying. Amy calmed down and sat back down in her chair. She took a few deep breaths, then asked one more question;

"Now that... that thing has seen us... will it come after us?"

"No." Eleven said very sure of herself. "It isn't after you, or Mike, or Carter. It's only after me."

11. Chapter 11: The Break-In

A/N: The rating for this story was changed to 'T' for some things that happen in this chapter. Not sure if I had to, but just wanted to be safe. Happy reading.

Winter break started right after the dance. Everyone involved in the situation in the library was happy to have an entire two weeks to cool off and forget about it. They were a little afraid that they would get in trouble for tearing apart the library, but Carter made sure that there was no evidence tying any of them to the scene. Eleven wanted to spend her first Christmas with Mike, but his family was heading out to Utah to go skiing with their cousins that lived in Chicago. Before he left, Mike gave Eleven a brightly colored package and told her to wait until Christmas to open it.

Around town, Eleven saw a lot of houses with colorful lights on them. She thought were pretty, but Joyce didn't put them up for obvious reasons. When Eleven woke up on Christmas Eve, she found snow on the ground. She had experienced snow the previous year, but it had all melted too soon. Most of the day was spent outside building snowmen and throwing snowballs. Will was out with her most of the day and Joyce and Jonathan came out every once in a while. Eleven had a great time, but part of the way through the afternoon, she got tired and went inside. Her and Joyce spent the evening baking cookies and singing songs, which annoyed the boys a little bit. Finally, they all went to bed.

As soon as the morning light began streaming through her window, Eleven got out of bed. She didn't normally like mornings, but she had heard so many great things about Christmas morning. The rest of the family got out of bed a couple minutes later and they went to the living room to find a small pile of gifts. By noon, Eleven had a bunch of new books from Nancy and Chief Hopper as well as some great new clothes from Joyce. She even got a new winter hat from Terri. She saved the present she was most excited about for last. She picked up the colorful package she got from Mike and slowly proceeded to take off the paper covering it. It was a brand new Super-Comm radio

just like the ones the boys had. She smiled and started to think of how she could possibly thank Mike for such a thoughtful gift.

New years came and a couple of days after, Mike returned home. School started back up again which annoyed pretty much everyone except Eleven. Sarah, Amy and Lucy kept sitting with Eleven, Mike, Will, Lucas and Dustin at lunch. They were upset after the ordeal in the library, but eventually forgave Eleven for not telling them about her. Their friendship was different after everything that happened, but no less strong. Carter had made it very clear to them that they could not tell anyone about the attacker or Eleven's powers, so they felt drawn to the group that already knew.

Nothing else special happened until one day at school. The group was at lunch like normal. Eleven took a banana out of her lunch box and attempted to follow an argument between Amy and Dustin. It had started out as a disagreement about a question on a math assignment but somehow escalated into a full on fight even though both of them had forgotten what they were fighting about. The rest of the group stopped what they were doing to watch the spectacle of ridiculousness unfold. Eventually, Amy and Dustin also realized how ridiculous their fight was, but continued on anyway. Then, Eleven felt something she hadn't felt in a while.

It came slower than the previous times, but it was certainly another attack. She became woozy and then collapsed onto Mike, who was sitting right next to her.

"El... are you OK?" Mike asked, desperate for her to just say 'yes' even though he knew that wasn't going to happen.

"Attack... another one." she said. Mike enlisted Dustin's help. They got her to her feet and were able to get her out of the cafeteria without anyone noticing anything was too wrong with her. Once they were out, Mike picked Eleven up and carried her the rest of the way to Carter's room.

Carter dropped his sandwich and ran over to help once Mike, Dustin and Eleven entered his room. Mike set Eleven down on one of the tables. He held her hand as she lost consciousness. Once she was under, she heard the voice again. But this time, it had a completely

different message;

"You won't come back to us. We will get you. But for the time being, we're going to the secret place. We know where it is." Eleven woke suddenly once the message had repeated a couple of times. The headache was still there, but quickly going away.

"We need to go to the Coalition base." she announced.

"Why?" asked Carter.

"They know where it is. They're going to do something there." Carter realized that time was an important factor, so he rushed out to the car with Eleven following close behind.

"Mike and Dustin, you two need to stay here. I'll handle things with the school, but you guys need to cover for Eleven somehow."

"How?" asked a confused Dustin.

"I don't know. No time for me to figure it out." Carter said as he threw open the door to the car. Eleven jumped in the other side at the same time. Carter managed to buckle his seat belt at the same time as starting the engine. He pulled out of the parking spot at what seemed like dangerous speeds, then slammed the car into first, spinning the tires as he drove down the school driveway.

Once they were out of Hawkins, Carter flipped a switch hidden under the steering wheel. Hidden red and blue lights started flashing and a loud siren started. Carter turned onto the highway and was happy to see that there wasn't much traffic on it in the middle of the day. He was able to go well above the speed limit and make it to the city in record time. They parked in the underground garage, but didn't take much time so make sure the car fit into a spot. Carter and Eleven threw open the doors and began to run to the elevator.

"Carter?" they heard a loud voice from behind. They stopped for a moment and turned around to see Freely running towards them. "What are you doing here?"

"This is going to sound crazy, but Eleven heard a voice while she got telepathically attacked and we think the base is under threat."

"I believe that. I rushed over here when a bunch of alarms started going off here about ten minutes ago." The three ran into the elevator and it started its journey down to the secret base. Both Carter and Freely pulled guns out and got them ready to fire, Freely looked a lot more comfortably handling his. The elevator neared its destination and both of the agents insisted that Eleven get behind them.

The doors opened and everything was dark. Carter and Freely took out flashlights and looked around the room. There were a couple of sparks coming off a broken lamp at the reception desk, then they saw the bodies. Strewn across the floor were the bodies of what seemed like most if not all of the security staff. Eleven wasn't too disturbed. She had seen dead bodies before. The group pushed on. They didn't look for any survivors, instead they went into the cell-block. After navigating through all the hallways, finding all the security doors broken and hanging open, they found their worst fear confirmed. Twelve was gone.

A sweep of the facility revealed that none of the invaders were still there. They did find a group of Coalition agents and analysts that were there, so they gathered everyone into a conference room.

"Freely... you're the highest ranking agent here. That means you're in charge." Carter said.

"OK..." started Freely, taking command of his new role. "Can anyone here tell us what happened?" One of the other agents in the room offered to tell the story as she understood it;

"There weren't many of us here. Most of the agents were out on assignment and I guess the invader knew that. They wouldn't encounter much resistance without everyone here. A couple from the security team saw the video feed from the elevator, they saw someone get on it. I didn't see the footage, but I guess the elevator started going down, so the security team went over to stop them from getting in. As soon as the elevator doors opened, all the security guys dropped to the ground and stopped moving a little later. A couple of the remaining agents tried to go after it but the same thing that happened to the security guys happened to them. The rest of us just activated the alarms and hid, hoping to come out with our lives. A couple of minutes later, it came back carrying something big, then it

got on the elevator and left. You guys just missed it." There was a moment of silence to let the story sink in before Freely started with questions;

"How many intruders were there?"

"One." said a couple of people at the same time.

"One? How could one person do this?" Freely asked. He sounded pretty confused and a little angry.

"How could one person throw an entire tree at my friend with their mind?" Eleven asked from her seat in the corner.

"You think it was the same person?" Freely asked.

"I'm sure it was the same person." Eleven said, then she proceeded to explain the voice she heard warning of the attack. Freely waited to allow anyone to give their opinion, but when nobody did, he took charge again.

"Carter. You've been involved with this the longest. What do you think?"

"I still don't know exactly what *it* was..." He thought to himself before continuing. "But I no longer think that this is the CIA or the Department of Energy trying to cover something up. I think it is something entirely different and much more sinister." Everyone in the room looked to Freely for orders.

"We're going to make this case our main priority. Everyone here is now on my team." he started. Everyone looked directly at him, hanging on every word he said. "Carter is going to remain in his position at the school..." Carter nodded "... and we're going to put more agents in Hawkins. It seems like that is the epicenter of all of this. Finally, I don't care what it takes, we are going to get into all the laboratories that have been keeping us out and we are going to find out what's been happening." Freely looked around the room, he seemed a little surprised that nobody questioned his authority.

Carter and Eleven got back to the school just a couple of minutes

after the last bell rang. They found the whole group from lunch by the bike racks. They were discussing what happened at lunch when Carter and Eleven came over and brought them all into the chemistry room. This was the first time that Sarah, Amy and Lucy were a part of a meeting with Carter, so they were a little nervous, but mostly intrigued. Carter locked the door and made more sure than usual that nobody else was listening in on their conversation before explaining. Most of the story was told by Carter. Eleven gave some details here and there, but she mostly listened and nodded along to Carter's explanation. Once he was done, it was a long time before anyone said anything. There was only one question that was asked, but it was the only one that was needed.

"Should we be scared?" asked Mike.

"I would like to say that you're all completely safe." Carter explained. "I would like to say that because The Coalition is taking this case so seriously and because there will be so many agents and so many eyes on Hawkins in the near future that you have nothing to worry about. But I can't say that. I can't guarantee any of you are entirely safe." Nobody wanted to talk after that, they were trying to find something good about what Carter had just told them but there was nothing there. Eventually, Eleven did talk;

"May I point something out?" she asked, not really expecting an answer. "There are a couple of people that should know about this but don't."

All the kids called their parents and told them that they were staying at school late to work on a project with Dr. Carter, which wasn't entirely a lie. Will and Eleven didn't lie to Joyce though. They told her to get over to the school for an important meeting, and to bring Jonathan along. A couple of other calls were made and eventually, everyone that need to be there said they would come. The kids rearranged the desks in the room into a circle so that everyone could talk to each other a little better while Carter worked to get all his information in order.

Joyce was the first to arrive with Jonathan. She looked scared and wanted to know immediately what had happened, but she eventually

agreed to wait for the others. Chief Hopper arrived second. He was surprised to see Carter and wanted answers, but eventually sat down and waited, albeit a little more reluctantly than Joyce. In just a couple of more minutes, Nancy and Steve Harrington got there and the meeting could start.

Carter took his seat and started his introduction;

"The people in this room are all the people in Hawkins that know about Eleven's abilities. You all know who I am, but it has come to my attention recently that a lot of you didn't know I was back in Hawkins."

"Yeah, I would have liked to know that." cut in Chief Hopper.

"I thought it would be best to keep my presence as quite as possible at first, but recent events have changed that opinion. Let's start from the beginning:" the entire story took about an hour. It was unrehearsed and told from many different perspectives, but eventually, everyone was just about on the same page. There was a long pause after the story to let everyone deal with the facts on their own, then Carter started again; "My colleague, Agent Freely, is in charge of the national investigation into everything that has been happening concerning these events. I am in charge of what's going on in Hawkins. There are going to be a couple more agents coming into town. Chief, I'm going to place two of them in the police force with you. It's important that they can have the authority around town that police officers have. One more is going to be undercover in the school, but I'm not going to tell you where because it's important that we have someone that the enemy doesn't know is on our side." Everyone around the room gave some indication of agreement before Carter carried on. "I know that a lot of this will come as a big shock to you and it is probably quite scary. I'm not going to pretend that everything will turn out all right in the end because I don't know that for certain. What's important now is that we all work together. Eleven is in the most danger of any of us, so we all need to help keep her safe. She is very strong and can do a lot to defend herself, but our adversaries are cunning and will have some way to get to her. I don't know what exactly they are going to do, but I have my suspicions." Nobody else had ever heard these suspicions before. Some leaned in in curiosity. "The Coalition was working on a project to stop someone

like Eleven from using their powers." The reactions to this were different for everyone. Some just waited for Carter's next sentence, while others were confused or even angry. "It was never intended to be used on Eleven herself. It was intended to make it so we could safely arrest whoever the mysterious attacker in the black cloak is. But the files for that project were stolen and our enemies have them now. The scientists at The Coalition are working hard to build a working version of it so we can take down the person who went after Eleven on Halloween and at the Snow-Ball. Until that time, we need work as hard as possible to make sure everyone here stays safe." Carter turned to Eleven and told her something she knew for a while, but she didn't really want to think about; "It will happen, but your normal life will have to be put on hold a little longer."

A/N: The holidays here in Germany are taking up most of my time. I will be traveling to Poland tomorrow and will not be taking my laptop so unless I become so inclined as to type on my iPad, this is the last chapter of the year. I will however continue to read reviews so please keep those coming! Have a great last couple days of 2016 and you can see what happens to all the characters in 2017!

12. Chapter 12: The Source

A/N: I got back from Poland yesterday and was able to write a new chapter. I'm going to keep working on the story whenever I have free time (which is surprisingly often).

After the meeting ended, Will went to Dustin's house to work on some homework. Joyce had to go to work, but didn't want to leave Eleven home alone. It took a while, but Carer was able to convince her that the house was safe (or as he put it: "I put so much security on that house it would be stupid for someone to so much as loiter there."). Mike noticed that there was something off about Eleven, so he went with her. The ride was completely silent. They eventually got to Eleven's house and she put her bike away without saying anything then went to the door.

"I guess I'll head home too." said Mike. He picked up his bike and turned it around and was about to ride off when Eleven finally spoke.

"No." Mike turned around again to see Eleven looking sad. "Please stay." She said. Mike stared into her eyes and saw that she didn't want to be alone. He too put away his bike and went in the house with her.

"You know... you've lived here for over a year now but I've never been in your room before." Mike remarked. Eleven had let him in but didn't say anything else. He followed her into her room. She had sat down on the bed and Mike uncomfortably went around the room looking at all the small things she had on the shelves and the walls. He had never been in a girl's room except for Nancy's and he wasn't entirely sure how to act. He heard a small snuffle from Eleven and quickly turned around to see her on the verge of tears. "What's wrong?" he asked. He quickly went over to the bed and sat down next to Eleven.

"Twelve." she said. She sniffled some more, holding back complete tears a little while longer. It took her a moment before she was able to get more out. "Last time I talked to him... I promised that he

would have a normal life. That he could be like you and me..." She sniffled a little more and let the first tears fall from her eyes. "But now... he's gone... and there's nothing I can do. I told him I was his friend. Friends don't lie." She broke down and started fully crying. Mike pulled her into his arms and tried his best to comfort her.

"No... none of this is your fault." he reassured her. "The people that took him. This is their fault and they will pay for it." He was beginning to get angry at the people that took away Twelve and made Eleven cry. "We will get him back and he will have the life you promised him. You are a good friend." He didn't have anything else to say, so he just sat there and held Eleven close. He didn't want her to be sad, but he also felt that she deserved to cry right then.

Everyone thought their world would be immediately different after the big meeting with Carter and the increased security measures, but for the most part, nothing big happened. Two agents came to town that Hopper immediately hired to the Hawkins Police Force, everyone was a little more careful going about their daily activities and Sarah, Amy and Lucy started showing up at the daily meetings with Carter. But other than that, there weren't any big changes. January turned to February and then to March before any new big developments happened.

At one of the meetings after Chemistry, Carter pulled a big piece of equipment out of the cabinet and set down on the table. He made a face as if he was presenting the next big thing, but everyone else just saw it as a big lump of electronics.

"What is it?" Lucas finally asked.

"This... this is amazing." Carter said while smiling. The kids had noticed that when he presented something, he enjoyed a certain level of theatrics. It was fun during chemistry class and they were able to put up with it during their meetings. "From all the research I've been doing into the telepathic attacks on Eleven, I was able to build this." He flipped a small switch and the whole thing started buzzing and came to life. "Next time there is an attack on Eleven, this will allow us to track the source."

"So we can finally figure out who is doing this to her?" Mike asked, hopefully.

"Yes." Carter replied with confidence. "So... it is very important that you tell me immediately when the next attack starts. OK, El?"

The attacks had become much less frequent and it wasn't until a sunny day in mid-April that Carter was able to figure out if his invention worked. Eleven looked at the clock and noticed that there were only five minutes left in the class. She was excited to go home that day because Mike finally promised to teach her how to play Dungeons and Dragons. She turned her head away from the clock and towards the blackboard to take some more notes when it started. The attack hit her harder than any other had before. It took her a moment before she was able to realize what was happening. She was about to raise her hand to ask to be excused but decided that there was no time and simply ran out the door.

"Miss Byers!" yelled the teacher after her. "Miss Byers!" Eleven stumbled through the halls, but went as fast as she could. About three minutes later, she burst through the chemistry room door to see Carter finishing up his lesson.

"El!" he exclaimed. "Is everything OK?" Eleven looked into his eyes and he immediately understood what was happening. He ran to the back of the room and got the machine out of the cabinet. He flipped the switch and went out of the room with it. It took about a minute to fully turn on but when it did, Carter was surprised. "The signal is coming from inside the school!" The bell rang and the hallways were flooded with kids all wanting to go home. Eleven was able to stay with Carter as he pushed his way through the crowds and followed the signal shown on the machine. Mike saw them in the hall. When he saw the machine, he knew what was happening. He rushed over and put Eleven's arm over his shoulder to stop her from stumbling.

"What's going on?" he asked. He had a general idea what was happening, but he wanted to know a little more exactly.

"El got an attack and the signal is coming from inside the school." Carter didn't look up from the small screen on the machine or stop

pushing through the crowds when he answered. Eventually, they got outside and Carter announced; "It's close."

"What is?" asked Mike.

"The source." Carter replied. Carter rushed over to the bike rack where the machine finally narrowed the source down to one person. Carter set the machine down on the ground quickly, but he made sure not to break it before running over to the source. He grabbed and almost tackled Troy before pulling him back into the building.

Much later that afternoon, Troy had been sedated and woke up in the interrogation room at the Coalition base. Freely was on the phone with his parents trying to get them to stop asking questions while Carter, Eleven and Mike were standing on the other side of the one-way mirror looking into the interrogation room.

"So... Troy was the one attacking Eleven all this time?" Mike asked.

"The evidence we have seems to say that." said Carter. "But it still doesn't seem to make sense."

"Why not?" asked Mike. "He's been terrible to me and my friends all my life. There were two times that Eleven got attacks standing five feet from Troy. When she got the attack on her bike, she was right near his house and you're machine seems to think it's him too."

"I know how that all looks, but I have a feeling that it's not him." Carter said. Eleven was silent. She spent the whole conversation looking at Troy. He was scared. Of course he would be. He woke up in a small concrete room after being sedated at school. Eleven simply looked at him. She was looking for something on his face that would tell her something, but found nothing of use.

She stopped staring when Freely entered the room with them.

"I finally got off the phone with the kid's parents who are super annoying." he said. "A team just got back from the school. They brought everything from his locker. After looking through the stuff, we found enough evidence to connect him to the attacks on Eleven

and The Coalition. We found something else too." He turned his head to face Eleven. "We found a paper in his locker describing a location. Based on everything we got from the staff here and the security cameras around town, that is the place he brought Twelve after he broke in here." Eleven perked up a little bit. Mike knew how much finding Twelve meant to her and he was happy that there was finally something that could help on that front. Mike turned to look at Carter. He just looked confused. He looked like he was trying to think through everything that had just happened.

Mike and Eleven spent the night at the base. Eleven called Joyce and told her honestly where she was. Joyce felt that she was safe there and was OK with it. Mike called his mom and told her that he was staying the night at the Byers' house. Joyce was willing to vouch for him and after a little convincing, she was also OK with it. Mike also called Nancy and told her the truth just to make sure there was someone else who actually knew where he was. A couple of agents went in to talk to Troy, but they got nothing useful out of him. They showed him all the evidence they got from his locker, but he said he didn't know what it was. Mike and Eleven also got called out of school for the next day while interrogation continued. After a couple of hours, Mike reached a similar conclusion to Carter;

"You know..." he started. "I really want Troy to be the bad guy in this... but maybe he isn't."

"Nancy! What are you doing here? The assembly is about to start." Terri called down the hall to Nancy who was standing idly by her locker in a nearly empty hall. Nancy shook her head, as if snapping out of a small trance and looked at Terri who was walking over to her.

"Sorry." Nancy said. She looked at a clock and noticed that they only had a couple of minutes to get to the gym before the assembly started. "I forgot about the assembly. That would probably explain why the halls are empty." Nancy laughed a little as Terri caught up to her and they started walking towards the gym.

"You looked lost in your thoughts. Something wrong?" Terri asked.

"No. Not really." Nancy thought. "Well... there's some stuff happening, but I promised not to tell anyone what it is."

"I understand. Promises are important."

"Yeah." Nancy said, dipping into her thoughts a little bit again. They got to the gym door. There was nobody else there, everyone was already in their seats on the bleachers. "Hey, Terri." Nancy said right before they got to the gym door.

"Yeah?"

"I just wanted to say thanks."

"For what?"

"For being such a good friend. These past couple months... there's been a lot happening. I just wanted to say thanks for being there."

"Oh, Nancy." Terri said while smiling. "I almost started to like you." Nancy smiled and laughed a little bit.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I almost thought of you as a 'friend'. But that would be unprofessional." Nancy's smile faded and she looked at Terri completely differently.

"Terri..."

"That's not my real name." The person standing before Nancy was now a complete stranger. Nancy tried to say something else but couldn't. She suddenly flew back through the doors into the gym. The doors suddenly all slammed shut and locked themselves.

13. Chapter 13: Ten

Troy hadn't said anything useful for hours. Freely decided to give him a break. Troy was give a big tray of food and everyone else went into the conference room to get lunch and discuss what was happening. Mike bit in to a croissant when the speaker phone in the middle of the table rang. Freely pressed the button to pick it up.

"Freely here." he said.

"Freely..." came the voice of his secretary; "...there's an unidentified person on line three asking for you."

"Put them through." Freely demanded. The phone went silent for a moment then a familiar voice came through;

"Hello, agent." the voice said.

"Who is this?" Freely asked.

"That's a surprisingly complicated question. I suppose a couple of you there know me as Nancy's friend Terri. But that's not my real name."

"Then what is your real name?" asked Freely.

"Ten." Mike and Eleven reeled back in surprise when they heard that. They were scared of what she was going to say.

"How did you get this number?" Carter asked from his chair off to the side of the room.

"Simple. I picked it up last time I was there." Ten answered. Everyone around the room looked at each other. They were all confused as to why their intruder would be calling.

"What do you want?" asked Agent Freely.

"Oh, not much. I just wanted to let you know about the hostage situation." Ten said in an almost joking voice.

"What hostage situation?" asked Carter.

"The one at Hawkins High School." Ten said while laughing. "Everyone is in the gym which is surrounded by my guards. They have been informed that they are hostages but they still don't know why. If you hand Eleven over to us, they'll all be fine. I suppose that's all I have to say. Oh... almost forgot. If you don't show up, the first person we will kill is little Nancy Wheeler." Carter looked over to Mike and Eleven who were terrified at the threat. "OK. That's everything. Bye!" There was a short click as the phone on the other end got hung up.

Everyone in the room was silent for a couple of seconds. Freely finally stood up and took control.

"We're going to make this right." he announced. "I am ordering every agent to get ready. We are going in full force to Hawkins to fight this."

"No." came a small voice from the corner. Everyone turned to see that the voice had come from Eleven.

"No? Why no?" asked Freely.

"You said you know where Twelve is, right?" she asked.

"Well... we think so." Freely responded.

"Send a team to get him." Eleven demanded. "All of them are going to be focusing on Hawkins. You can get Twelve to safety and I can keep my promise to him."

"No. It's too dangerous." said Freely. "What if they get you?"

"I don't care." Eleven said. "I promised Twelve that he would have a normal life and friends don't lie. I don't care if they get me. I'm stronger than him. I can get through it." Mike was stunned. He wanted to argue against Eleven, but couldn't think of anything to say.

"I don't think there's any use in arguing with her at this point." said Carter. "Go with a small team to get Twelve. I'll lead up the team in Hawkins." Freely reluctantly agreed. Carter turned to one of the scientists in the room. "Did you ever get finish that device to block telepathic powers?"

"We have a prototype, but we haven't tested it yet." the scientist replied.

"Do you think it will work?" Carter asked.

"On principle, yes. But I'm not entirely sure."

"Principle is good enough for me. I need the prototype." The scientist ran out of the room and came back with a big black ring with a bunch of wires sticking out of it.

Fifteen minutes later, everyone was ready. Freely got into a van with about four other agents to try to get Twelve while everyone else started for Hawkins. The convoy of vans was led by Carter. They sped down the highway, sirens blaring and make it to Hawkins in record time. When they got there, they found that Chief Hopper was already there.

"What's going on here? Do you have any idea?" the Chief asked when Carter got out of his car. Carter gave him a quick overview of the situation. "What are you planning to do?" Hopper asked.

"We're just going to go in there and see if we can defuse the situation." Carter answered. "It's very important that you keep everyone else out of there." He turned to Mike and Eleven. "I'm not willing to risk your safety. I know you don't want to, but you both need to stay out here." Neither Mike nor Eleven said anything. Carter turned back and looked at the big team of agents in body armor behind him. He nodded and led the group into the school.

Eleven turned to Mike. Mike could see in her eyes what she wanted to do. She was going to go against Carter's orders and go into the school.

"No." said Mike.

"I'm the only one that can end this." Eleven said. "I have to do something. I'm going in."

"Then I'm coming with." announced Mike.

"No. It's too dangerous."

"You don't get to use the same argument I just tried to use on you." Mike said. It took Eleven a moment to agree with him, but eventually they were on the same page. They both looked over to see the Chief was talking to some people, trying to explain the situation to them. Once they were convinced that nobody was paying any attention to them, Mike and Eleven ran to the door at the side of the school and went inside.

Inside the school, the search for Ten was on. The agents searched classrooms and hallways but didn't find her. They tried to get into the gym, but it was locked and being held shut by something more than deadbolts. Eventually, Carter got to the cafeteria and when he opened the door, he found Ten lounging across a couple of chairs, eating some pudding out of a can.

"Tell your agents to stay outside the room or I tell my agents to go into the gym and start shooting." Ten demanded, not looking up from the pudding.

"Do what she said." Carter said to the agents behind him. They left the room and closed the door. Carter took a quick survey of the room. It was empty apart from Ten sitting in the middle and about seven guards standing at attention around the walls. The guards were all dressed in black and they had black helmets on with tinted plastic on the front of them that hid their faces.

"Did you bring Eleven?" she asked.

"She is in safety." Carter said. Ten started laughing hysterically. She threw the can of pudding and her spoon across the table and stood up.

"If you think that anywhere is truly safe from us, you are sorely mistaken." she said. She looked Carter up and down and saw the black ring he was carrying. "Is that what I think it is?" Ten asked, smiling. "Is that a device to block my powers? I saw in some of the files I stole that you were working on one. Now you've brought it here in your valiant attempt to try and stop me." she said

sarcastically. "You really are incredibly stupid." The ring was forced out of Carter's hand by Ten's powers and smashed against the floor. "Now... where is Eleven?" Carter decided that the best thing he could do at this point was to stall until he could come up with something to do.

"How were you able to frame Troy?" he asked.

"It wasn't difficult. I put a bunch of stuff in his locker and mirrored the telepathic signal off of him last time I attacked Eleven." Ten replied. Carter tried to stall more, but didn't have the time. The door on the other side of the cafeteria opened up and Mike and Eleven came through. "You did come!" exclaimed Ten. "How brave of you. Get her." she commanded the guards with a much more serious voice than she had previously used.

All of the guards moved from the walls and towards Eleven. Carter pulled out his gun, but that too was forced to the ground. Each of the guards had a big ring similar to the one Carter had brought. Eleven forced away each of them that came her way, but they all just kept getting back up and eventually they overwhelmed her. One of the guards came from behind while Eleven was overwhelmed and got the ring around Eleven's neck. Once she noticed, Eleven tried to force him away as she did all the others, but her powers weren't working. Two more guards came over and grabbed her. Mike ran and tried to free Eleven, but one of the other guards grabbed him and dragged him away.

"Sad for you guys." Ten said. "Better luck next time. But look on the bright side. All of those people in the gym are safe." Ten and her group walked over to one of the big double doors that led to the outside of the school. Two of the guards that weren't carrying Eleven opened the doors. They expected to walk out to their truck, but instead they were surprised to see a giant group of Coalition agents led by Agent Freely. The Coalition team burst through every door at once. They were able to surround Ten and subdue her guards. Carter ran over to one of the fallen guards and took the power-blocking device he still had.

"Give it up." Carter yelled. "You know you've lost." Ten looked angrily around the room. She knew there was no way she was getting out

with her freedom.

"I admit. I've lost." she said. "But I'm not done yet." A knife flew out of the kitchen and stopped right next to Ten. "If we can't have her... neither can you." The knife flew straight at Eleven. Eleven tried to stop it, but the device around her neck was stopping her from using her powers. All she could do was close her eyes.

Mike gasped as the spray of blood hit him. Carter ran over to Ten while she was still focusing on the attack and got the ring over her head. Eleven opened her eyes and looked down at her torso. There wasn't as much blood as she expected. In fact, there wasn't as much knife as she expected. She looked up to see a very bloody Agent Freely collapse to the ground. He had thrown himself in front of the blade just in time to save Eleven.

Ten saw what had happened and started screaming once she realized she had lost. It took four Coalition agents to carry her to the armored car waiting outside. Carter, Mike and Eleven ran to Freely to help.

"Why did you do that?" asked Eleven.

"I've done some good in my life." he said between bloody coughs. "But you could do so much more, Eleven. I know that by saving you, I've saved so many more people too."

"What happened on your mission with Twelve?" Carter asked.

"He's OK. He's waiting outside. He's waiting to start his normal life." Freely said slowly. He coughed once more then stopped breathing entirely. Carter tried to do emergency first-aid on him, but it was no use.

The next couple of weeks were chaotic. Everyone that was held hostage in the gym was told that the school had been put into lock-down because of an intruder, which wasn't entirely a lie. Agent Freely's funeral was sad. It was mostly attended by silent men in black suits and sunglasses who came to pay their respects to the fallen agent as well as a couple of kids. His grave marker was incredibly plain to maintain the secrecy of his work, but Mike and

Eleven promised that someday they would make sure he was remembered as the hero he was.

School was especially boring after so much excitement. Troy was returned home after his memory had been wiped of everything he had seen at the base and his family was paid handsomely to not say anything. The meetings with Carter after chemistry class continued. They were partly to keep everyone informed on the relevant Coalition activities, but mostly because he was one of their friends now.

The last day of school came along in June. For the most part, everyone was happy to get the summer off, but they also knew that it would probably be their last time with Carter. They planned a party in the chemistry room during lunch. They brought all kinds of desert and soft drinks to celebrate the end of the school year, but mostly to ask Carter a couple of questions.

"Carter?" Lucy asked shyly. "You're the substitute chemistry teacher."

"Yes, I know that." Carter replied with a smile and a little bit of sarcasm. "Anything else?"

"What's going to happen to you after this year?" Everyone got silent. This was the question that they all wanted to ask.

"Well... I have a couple of possibilities." Carter announced as he walked over to his desk. "I am spending the summer heading a coalition task-force to investigate any other telepathic individuals that might be out there. After that... I was offered Freely's job at The Coalition." Everyone around the room perked up. They didn't want to see him go, but they also thought it would be good for him. "But I turned that down." A wave of shock hit the room so hard that Dustin spit out his soda before asking;

"Why the hell did you do that?"

"Because we all know in the back of our minds that this whole thing isn't over and it would be better if I stayed in Hawkins." He pulled an envelope off his desk and walked back to the table where the kids were. "And... I've been offered a permanent job as a teacher here." He

set the envelope down on the table. A couple of the kids rushed to grab it and read it first, but Amy was the quickest. She pulled the letter out and started reading out loud;

"Dear Dr. Carter, Because of the extremely good results from your students and the overwhelmingly high reviews you have gotten from the community at large, I am proud to offer you a permanent position in the Hawkins School System as a chemistry teacher. Sincerely, Superintendent Rogers." There was a general noise of approval that went around the room before Lucas started back with another question;

"What about after that? You aren't going to be a teacher here forever."

"Why not?" asked Carter. Everyone else seemed intrigued. "After all of this is over, I've decided to retire from The Coalition." The mood of the room went back to shock.

"Why?" asked Dustin, talking through a muffin.

"A number of reasons. First of all, almost nobody stays a secret agent for life. I've done some good work but I think that after all of this it's time for me to start my own life. Second of all..." he went back to the desk and picked up a big file. "Having a nice house and a legitimate job has allowed me to adopt a child." He set the file down on the table and there was another small scramble to see who would get to it first, this time Dustin won. He opened it and started reading.

"It says here that you're adopted child will be here next week." Dustin said. He read a little further before asking; "Who's Timothy Carter?"

"The child I'm adopting." Carter said while a smile moved over his face. "You all probably know him better under the name; 'Twelve'." Eleven smiled and almost broke into tears again when she heard this. But she wasn't sad at all. She looked around the room to see the big group of friends she had. She thought about all the plans they had made for the summer then she looked over to Mike. She was as happy as she had ever been.

A/N: That's almost the end of the story. There will be a small epilogue coming out (probably later today), but then it's done. I still want to write so I will be writing another sequel to this story, but I would love as much feedback as you can give me. Tell me what you liked and what you didn't. Please tell me what I could have done better and maybe some small things you would like to see in the next story. It will be updated a little less often than this one (I probably won't post three chapters in one day again) but the chapters will probably be a little longer. Thank you very much for reading. (A very similar author's note will be posted at the end of the epilogue as well.)

14. Epilogue

"She's been calling for you ever since she got here." the agent told Eleven. "It's gotten worse recently. She's been refusing to eat or drink until she gets to meet with you." The agent led her down the twisting hallways of the base into the cell block and then further towards the interrogation room. Eleven looked through the one-way mirror at the one person she didn't want to see. "You don't have to do this. We can find some other way." Eleven looked at the large collar that was around her neck. They had swapped the one Carter had put on her for a bigger and stronger version in the past couple of weeks.

"No. I want to face this." Eleven said. She was buzzed into the small room and sat opposite from her psychopath of an enemy who was handcuffed to the table.

"I knew you would come." Ten said. "Did they tell me about how I've been starving myself to get you here? I knew that one would get you. You wouldn't let me starve. Not when you see so much of yourself in me."

"Why did you ask me here?" Eleven asked.

"To talk. I want to know about you." Ten said, as if they were old friends that hadn't seen each other in years. "How about you start." Eleven had a lot of questions for Ten, but she didn't want to be there for too long.

"Fine. What are you?" Eleven asked very bluntly.

"I'm what you would have been if you would have just sat still. I'm the weapon they tried to turn you into. I'm your full potential."

"Why do you seem so happy about it?"

"Because I know my own power. There will be a day when you're going to get a little taste of power. Real power. Not just slamming doors shut or even crushing people's heads. When you feel what real power is... you're never going to go back." Eleven didn't want to hear Ten any more. She stood up and started walking over to the door.

"Wait." Ten called. Eleven turned back to face her. "I have just one question. One thing I can't figure out."

"What?"

"In the forest on Halloween... I threw an entire tree at your boyfriend."

"Yes. I know." Eleven got a little bit angry when she remembered how Ten tried to hurt Mike.

"So... I'm older than you... I've trained harder than you..."

"What's the question?" Eleven asked. She was hoping Ten would get to the point so she could leave.

"How did you beat me?" Eleven looked her adversary in the eye and simply said;

"I had something I cared to fight for." The door buzzed and Eleven walked out, leaving Ten to sit in silence.

A/N: That's the end of the story. I still want to write so I will be writing another sequel to this story, but I would love as much feedback as you can give me. Tell me what you liked and what you didn't. Please tell me what I could have done better and maybe some small things you would like to see in the next story. It will be updated a little less often than this one (I probably won't post three chapters in one day again) but the chapters will probably be a little longer. Finally; thank you very much for reading.

Please still leave a review if you fell like it. I know that this story has been finished for a while, but I still read and appreciate everything.

Update: The trilogy concludes in my third fanfic: The Legion.